

**TRANSCENDENTAL KINSHIP IN THE WORK OF GEORGE
FRIEL AND ALASDAIR GRAY**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines what I term ‘transcendental kinship’ in the work of George Friel and Alasdair Gray. This may be defined as the attitude of one who tries to surpass everyday embodied reality in an effort to relate to spiritual or mental others. The first chapter examines the relevance to Friel’s short stories of the notion of kinship developed by the Scottish anthropologist, William Robertson Smith. There we discover how personal identities are formed within networks of mutual recognition, and how even the relationship of worshipper to deity is modelled after this pattern. In the second chapter, we see how Friel’s alienated protagonists attempt to relate to a higher world – a kinship which they suppose to be revealed in providential patterns of co-incidence. This chapter also develops the notion of recognition in its second sense as that process by which one receives confirmation or disconfirmation of one’s self-conception. The place of this kind of recognition in the work of the Scottish psychoanalyst, R.D. Laing, provides a hermeneutic guide for the interpretation of Gray’s work which is advanced in my third chapter. Gray’s protagonists are inculcated with a sense of guilt by the recognitive responses of their community. It is for this reason that they develop a compensatory personal religion in which a higher power approves of and validates their spontaneous inclinations. Only a return, however, to everyday relations of trust can undo the pathological side-effects of this transcendental kinship. My fourth chapter transfers my analysis to the act of reading itself. For Friel and for Gray, the novel is traditionally a way by which the reader is

allowed to feel that he or she has glimpsed a world of greater reality than the everyday phenomenal scene. Consequently, both these authors develop innovative narrative techniques in order to challenge this complicity with the reader's own alienation from recognitive relations. I conclude my thesis with a chapter which analyses and integrates the specifically Scottish philosophical context which informs these motifs of transcendental kinship in the work of Friel and Gray. The work of both Robertson Smith and Laing may be fruitfully related to that of the Scottish psychoanalyst, W.R.D. Fairbairn, and the Scottish philosopher, John Macmurray. There is, in the work of all these thinkers, a constant concern with the nature of human community and with the effects of alienation from such recognitive relations.

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Finally, my gratitude goes to the friends and family who have supported me in various ways during the writing of this thesis. Particular appreciation goes to Alex Thomson, Tanith Muller, and Bob Irvine for their comments upon the completed work.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that, except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is entirely my own work and that no part of it has been submitted for any other degree or qualification.

Gavin Miller

ABBREVIATIONS

BP	Friel, George, <i>The Boy Who Wanted Peace</i> (London: Calder, 1964)
BT	Friel, George, <i>The Bank of Time</i> (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1994)
FH	Friel, George, <i>A Friend of Humanity: Selected Short Stories</i> (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1992)
GP	Friel, George, <i>Grace and Miss Partridge: a Novel</i> (London: Calder and Boyars, 1969)
J	Gray, Alasdair, <i>1982 Janine</i> (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1985)
K	Gray, Alasdair, <i>The Fall of Kelvin Walker</i> , rev. edn (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1986)
L	Gray, Alasdair, <i>Lanark: A Life in Four Books</i> (London: Paladin, 1987)
MA	Friel, George, <i>Mr Alfred, M.A.: a Novel</i> , Canongate Classics, 8 (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1987)
SF	Vonnegut, Jr., Kurt, <i>Slaughterhouse-Five or The Children's Crusade: A Duty-dance with Death</i> (London: Vintage, 1991)

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO FRIEL AND GRAY

Alasdair Gray needs little introduction – he is a well-known Scottish author and artist¹. George Friel, however, is a less familiar name to many readers of Scottish literature. He was born in 1910 to a working-class Glaswegian family. Although he published short stories and articles until his death in 1975, he is best remembered – if at all – for his five post-war novels: *The Bank of Time* (1959), *The Boy who Wanted Peace* (1964), *Grace and Miss Partridge* (1969), *Mr Alfred MA* (1972), and *An Empty House* (1974)².

Despite the extreme lack of secondary literature on George Friel, it is possible to identify an interesting dissension in critical opinion. For Glenda Norquay, Friel is more than just an urban realist:

The gritty realism of books like *The Boy Who Wanted Peace* [...], *Grace and Miss Partridge* [...] and *Mr Alfred MA* [...] made it easy to identify Friel with the traditions of Glaswegian social realism. But Friel was, in fact, a devotee of James Joyce's writing, and each novel is a carefully constructed experiment in parable, symbol and narrative style, full of wordplay and allusion. The subject matter of his works is that which has found its most common expression in the realist mode, but his style is modernist and experimental.³

¹ Those who would like to know more can consult Bruce Charlton, 'The Story So Far', in *The Arts of Alasdair Gray*, ed. by Robert Crawford and Thom Nairn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 1991), pp.10-21.

² A very full biography of Friel can be found in Iain Cameron, 'A Glasgow life' in 'George Friel: an Introduction to his Life and Work' (unpublished MLitt thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1987), pp.1-107.

³ Glenda Norquay, 'Four Novelists of the 1950s and 1960s', in *The History of Scottish Literature*, ed. by Cairns Craig, 4 vols (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University, 1987-88), IV (1987), pp.259-76 (pp.268-69).

This disparity between style and subject-matter correlates with the attitude of his protagonists to the city-life which surrounds them:

the disjunction in modes – between realism of content and artifice of style – mirrors the conflicts which his characters suffer, trapped between their imagination of an ideal world and the banal realities of making do with the actual. Like many of Joyce's characters, they strive towards a higher plane of human experience and imaginative purity, and find that their feet are trapped in the mire of a physical world they can only regard as failed.⁴

Norquay also discusses, with regard to Mr Alfred, the kind of motivation which directs Friel's protagonists away from the physical world:

The world appears increasingly alien to him until he finds a spiritual companion in one of his young female pupils at school. When his relationship with the one person who seems to offer an alternative to malice and cynicism is discovered, however, the eyes of the world, viewing the relationship as perverse, soon turn it into a thing of shame and corruption.⁵

She further argues that Friel himself – along with Robin Jenkins, Alan Sharp, and James Kennaway – is unable to see beyond this binary opposition between matter and spirit which is so important to his protagonists:

Ironically, then, although the four writers under consideration may each appear to present a reaction against the Scottish background which constrains them, it is the same Scottish inheritance which creates the ideology determining their conceptualisation of an alternative. In their polarisation of an elusive Eden and a petty, sordid or restrictive 'reality', they create a dichotomy not dissimilar to the 'fallen world' and promised 'heaven' of Calvinism.⁶

Character and author are, for Norquay, united by a worldview in which, if one cannot have heaven here on earth, then everyday reality must, indeed, be entirely corrupt:

Because of the elusiveness, indeed impossibility, of such an ideal their desires inevitably remain unfulfilled. And this failure serves in turn to maintain the edenic concept as ideal and

⁴ Norquay, p.269.

⁵ Norquay, p.270.

⁶ Norquay, p.261.

symbolic, fuelling their desire for it. [...] The four novelists considered here all attempt to escape from – through a critique of – a Scottish cast of mind, its religious and cultural inheritance. Yet in so doing it is the same cast of mind, Calvinist in origins, metaphysical in nature, which both determines their flight and ensures their return.⁷

Iain Cameron agrees, to an extent, with Norquay. Friel's protagonists develop, he tells us, 'a kind of escapist idealism that is particularly constructed to ward off the 'material world''⁸. Thus,

The reader should begin to recognise that Mr. Alfred's character is in a way similar to that of Annie Partridge. In both cases the character aspires to an idealistic, romantic state of existence which would remove them from what they perceive to be the mire of everyday life. Both characters fail to achieve their goal.⁹

Nevertheless, unlike Norquay, Cameron insists that Friel stands in a critical relation to his protagonists. His characters prefer a spiritual world because they are without a place in the everyday social world: '[The] concept of the isolated individual, isolated particularly in terms of 'normal' familial relations, is frequently at the heart of Friel's work, often representing an estrangement from real human contact which Friel plainly regards as destructive.'¹⁰ Both Norquay and Cameron agree that Friel's characters seek some kind of transcendence of their everyday existence. Cameron, however, dissents from Norquay's opinion that Friel himself shares this metaphysical orientation.

Cameron reaches this conclusion because he takes an essentially more sympathetic theoretical orientation towards Friel. For example, with regard to Miss

⁷ Norquay, p.275.

⁸ Iain Cameron, 'George Friel: an Introduction to his Life and Work' (unpublished MLitt thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1987), p.213.

⁹ Cameron, p.211.

¹⁰ Cameron, p.34.

Partridge's schizophrenia in *Grace and Miss Partridge*, Cameron refers to the work of the Glaswegian psycho-analyst, R.D. Laing:

One of Laing's central preoccupations is schizophrenia, and one of his central theses is that it is often caused by an imbalance in the reciprocation of one's actions within the community. Without any 'mirror' reflecting one's actions one cannot 'reorientate' oneself 'to the objective universe' – and equally fatal is a reciprocation which is overdominant and excludes one's own personality.¹¹

Cameron also emphasises that Laing's psychotherapy was developed within an international history of ideas – such as those formulated in German Idealism by, for example, Feuerbach: '[his] achievement, in the eyes of Laing and his associates, was that he stressed the importance of mutual communication between people as a means of creating true and meaningful interaction, and hence a better society.'¹² Although I will not follow this particular analysis of *Grace and Miss Partridge*, I do believe that Cameron's approach is essentially correct. Close attention to a context of internationally influenced, and influential, Scottish thought will reveal that Friel is quite able to criticise the need for transcendence which so afflicts his characters.

My sympathy with Scottish ideas also means that certain of Friel's primary texts will acquire a greater importance than they have to either Norquay or Cameron. I will pay far greater attention to Friel's short stories – including those early works published in the 1930s¹³. I will also analyse at length Friel's first novel, *The Bank of Time*. Cameron writes, rather dismissively, that '*The Bank of Time* sits somewhat

¹¹ Cameron, p.215.

¹² Cameron, p.215.

¹³ Fortunately, a selection of these works was published by Polygon in 1992: George Friel, *A Friend of Humanity: Selected Short Stories* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1992).

oddly alongside Friel's later and artistically more successful novels'¹⁴. I, however, will attempt to show that *The Bank of Time* is as sophisticated as *The Boy Who Wanted Peace, Grace and Miss Partridge*, and *Mr Alfred, MA*.

My analysis of Gray will include a more limited number of primary texts in its field of study. Certain of Gray's works, as he himself notes, are linked by a common theme:

A few years ago I noticed my stories described men who found life a task they never doubted until an unexpected collision opened their eyes and changed their habits. The collision was usually with a woman, involved swallowing alcohol or worse, and happened in the valley of the shadow of death. I had made novels and stories believing each an adventurous new world. I now saw the same pattern in them all – the longest novel used it thrice. Having discovered how my talent worked it was almost certainly defunct. Imagination will not employ whom it cannot surprise.

I told folk I had no more ideas for stories and did not expect them.¹⁵

This hiatus begins in 1985: 'Tom Maschler, the Chairman of Jonathan Cape Ltd, asked if I had started writing fiction again, a question he had asked annually since 1985.'¹⁶ The three novels which I will consider are part of this thematically unified pre-1985 grouping: they are *Lanark* (1981), *1982: Janine* (1984), and *The Fall of Kelvin Walker* (1985).

The secondary literature on Gray is far more extensive than that on Friel – even when narrowed down to work on these three primary texts. Nevertheless, even a brief examination can reveal a significant ambivalence. For Randall Stevenson,

Lanark is a thoroughly derivative novel, with many characters largely 'puppets' drawn from 'existing literature' – Thaw, for example, an extension of Joyce Cary's artist heroes; *Lanark*

¹⁴ Cameron, p.68.

¹⁵ Alasdair Gray, *Something Leather*, rev. edn (London and Basingstoke: Picador, 1991), p.232.

¹⁶ Gray, p.234.

an amalgam of figures from H.G. Wells and the posthumous heroes of Wyndham Lewis. In form and story as well as character, *Lanark* is so obviously a 'work of reference' that the playful list of references and plagiarisms in the Epilogue is almost superfluous.¹⁷

This lack of originality is, we are told, particularly obvious in Gray's attitude towards time:

Widespread appearance of random or non-serial assemblages of this kind confirms the judgement of Italian postmodernist Italo Calvino, who suggests that for the contemporary novel 'the dimension of time has been shattered, we cannot love or think except in fragments of time ... time ... seem[s] to have exploded.' Alasdair Gray's writing, particularly in *Lanark*, obviously shares this sense of a fragmented, incoherent, even apocalyptic history. With its individual books ordered Three, One, Two, Four; a prologue inserted between Books One and Three; and an epilogue somewhere towards the end of Book Four, *Lanark* thoroughly challenges serial form.¹⁸

This novelistic temporality is, then, a derivative of that found in other postmodern works:

Shifting and resistant to definition, Gray's Intercalendrical Zone is a summary figuration of a wider postmodernist vision in which, as various of Gray's characters remark, 'we don't bother much with time, now ... none of the clocks ... can be relied on, least of all the ones that go'.¹⁹

Nevertheless, Stevenson is uncertain about Gray's relation to postmodern literature:

If reality cannot be wholly known, nor language any longer conceived as tightly connected to it, why should not words be used to create other worlds? Especially if as Jorge Luis Borges suggests in his postmodernist parable 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius' – and Jock McLeish believes in 1982 *Janine* – such artificial domains can be richer and more seductive than anything offered by the political actualities of twentieth-century life. Something of

¹⁷ Randall Stevenson, 'Alasdair Gray and the Postmodern', in *The Arts of Alasdair Gray*, ed. by Robert Crawford and Thom Nairn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 1991), pp.48-63 (p.55).

¹⁸ Stevenson, p.50.

¹⁹ Stevenson, p.50.

postmodernism's ontological shift, in other words, also informs fantasy's cheerful other-worldliness.²⁰

Stevenson here alludes to Brian McHale's argument that postmodernism is concerned with ontology, while modernism is concerned with epistemology. As McHale puts it:

There is a kind of inner logic or inner dynamics [...] governing the change of dominant from modernist to postmodernist fiction. Intractable epistemological uncertainty becomes at a certain point ontological plurality or instability: push epistemological questions far enough and they "tip over" into ontological questions.²¹

Stevenson, though, suspects that this apparent shift to ontology may have a rather different function in Gray's work:

Lanark, in particular, illustrates the paradox that the most transparently, ostentatiously artificial texts may be the ones most likely to redirect their readers' attention upon reality: as Bertolt Brecht showed, an undermining of seductive, secure containment within illusion encourages spectators to take responsibility for reshaping the world beyond the stage.²²

Thus, 'neither readers nor characters can long be securely contained in worlds so clearly shown to be the results of Nastler's conjuring tricks.'²³

This uncertainty in Stevenson's attitude to *Lanark* is significant when considered in light of the critical literature on 1982: *Janine*. For S.J. Boyd, Jock McLeish's powers of world-creation are quite reprehensible:

words are useful to Jock's strategy in his particular situation. Because all the endless word-spinning he goes in for, the very time consuming and roundabout nature of verbal description,

²⁰ Stevenson, p.57.

²¹ Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* ([London]: Methuen, 1987; repr. London: Routledge, 1996), p.11.

²² Stevenson, p.60.

²³ Stevenson, pp.60-61.

delays him on the way to his inevitable goal, which is a sad detumescence. Pornographic fantasies make the world seem a thrillingly attractive place to Jock, keep his mind off his dreadful inner anxieties, make life seem worth going on with, but only as long as they continue to fail in their apparent aim.²⁴

Thus, 'it becomes clear that his fantasies are designed to prevent his mind turning to a consideration of his own life and in particular his treatment of the thoroughly common, human, warm, ordinary, earthy girl that was Denny.'²⁵ Marshall Walker agrees with this account, and adds political analysis to the list of Jock's distractions:

McLeish [...] wants to be free from his failure to recognise his mother's frustration, his failure to connect with his father, his failure to live in terms of Denny's goodness. He tries to obliterate his record of failure by elaborate pornographic fantasy and by competing, equally elaborate excursions into political analysis. His final success is another failure: neither sexual fantasy nor political hectoring can suppress the demand of the self to be solid.²⁶

Jock's fantasy life provides a screen with which to conceal his failure to achieve an authentic existence in the world of everyday human interaction.

It is this alienation which will enable us to relate coherently the work of both Friel and Gray. Friel's protagonists are, in the main, cut off from the human relations which might secure their identities within the surrounding community. This motivates their preference for, to use Cameron's terms, 'a kind of escapist idealism that is particularly constructed to ward off the 'material world''. A similar pattern can be found in Gray's characters. They tend to avoid the interpersonal relations which would reveal to them their own misery – this is why they are, in Gray's own words,

²⁴ S.J. Boyd, 'Black Arts: 1982 *Janine* and *Something Leather*', in *The Arts of Alasdair Gray*, ed. by Robert Crawford and Thom Nairn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 1991), pp.76-123 (p.112).

²⁵ Boyd, p.116.

‘men who found life a task they never doubted until an unexpected collision opened their eyes and changed their habits.’ This insulation from their own community is, as with Friel’s protagonists, predicated upon a sense of fellowship with spiritual or mental others who reside in a higher world – a phenomenon which I will term ‘transcendental kinship’. We shall see how Friel and Grays’ characters seek out transcendental kinship through conscious and unconscious rituals of communion, as well as through philosophical doctrines which insist on the lesser reality of the spatio-temporal world. Both authors are, however, in the content and form of their work, intensely critical of any attempt to rise above the everyday social relations which are essential to both a sense of belonging and to authentic self-consciousness.

My thesis is therefore an investigation of transcendental kinship in the work of Friel and Gray. The first chapter examines the relevance to Friel’s short stories of the notion of kinship developed by the Scottish anthropologist, William Robertson Smith. There we discover how personal identities are formed within networks of mutual recognition, and how even the relationship of worshipper to deity is modelled after this pattern. In the second chapter, we see how Friel’s alienated protagonists attempt to relate to a higher world – a kinship which they suppose to be revealed in providential patterns of co-incidence. This chapter also develops the notion of recognition in its second sense as that process by which one receives confirmation or disconfirmation of one’s self-conception. The place of this kind of recognition in the work of the Scottish psychoanalyst, R.D. Laing, provides a hermeneutic guide for the

²⁶ Marshall Walker, ‘The Process of Jock McLeish and the Fiction of Alasdair Gray’, in *The Arts of Alasdair Gray*, ed. by Robert Crawford and Thom Nairn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 1991), pp.37-47 (p.44).

interpretation of Gray's work which is advanced in my third chapter. Gray's protagonists are inculcated with a sense of guilt by the recognitive responses of their community. It is for this reason that Duncan Thaw develops a compensatory personal religion in which a higher power approves of and validates his spontaneous inclinations. Only a return, however, to everyday relations of trust can undo the pathological side-effects of this transcendental kinship. My fourth chapter transfers my analysis to the act of reading itself. For Friel and for Gray, the novel is traditionally a way by which the reader is allowed to feel that he or she has glimpsed a world of greater reality than the everyday phenomenal scene. Consequently, both these authors develop innovative narrative techniques in order to challenge this complicity with the reader's own alienation from recognitive relations. I conclude my thesis with a chapter which analyses and integrates the specifically Scottish philosophical context which informs these motifs of transcendental kinship in the work of Friel and Gray. The work of both Robertson Smith and Laing may be fruitfully related to that of the Scottish psychoanalyst, W.R.D. Fairbairn, and the Scottish philosopher, John Macmurray. There is, in the work of all these thinkers, a constant concern with the nature of human community and with the effects of alienation from such recognitive relations.

ONE

KINSHIP, MAGIC AND RELIGION IN THE SHORT STORIES OF GEORGE FRIEL

Introduction

In this chapter, I focus upon the short stories of George Friel. I firstly show that Friel is interested in the rituals which position human beings in networks of kinship. I then demonstrate, by close reference to Friel's work, the way in which these acts of social recognition may be corrupted by a utilitarian ethic derived from Christian asceticism. I conclude by examining the responses which Friel sees as typical of the spread of alienated social relations. He discerns a variety of latently magical and religious rituals which are employed to ward off the impingement of the market upon the world of love and community.

Kinship and Communion

The concerns of this initial investigation are the kin-group, the rituals which establish it, and the philosophical significance of these phenomena. An appropriate place to start is the examination of human fraternity in the short story 'Brothers'. A young boy, Peter Plottel, escapes his boredom during the summer holidays by playing football with a neighbouring gang into which his brother, John, has been accepted. John in some way betrays the gang, and Peter is forced into a confrontation with their leader, Shoe McAuchan.

Membership of a gang involves reciprocal duties. It is John's earlier failure to meet these duties which explains why he seeks membership in Shoe's 'tribe':

He [Peter] had no idea how John, long expelled by his own side of the street for his domineering manner and his cheating, had managed to join the McAuchan tribe, [...]; he had no doubt bluffed or bribed McAuchan into accepting him as a member. It was not the first time he had tried to attach himself to a neighbouring group, and it always ended the same way. Sooner or later the bluff would be found out or the bribe disowned. Sooner or later his brother would be thrown out, disgraced and despised, and he would be disgraced too. (FH 47)

As this passage suggests, any member of an opposing tribe can stand in as a suitable victim for the revenge of an injured tribe. Peter therefore understands that he too is in danger when his brother eventually betrays the McAuchanites: 'He did not know what his brother had done to forfeit the friendship of the McAuchan gang and involve him too in their enmity. He did not need to know. It was sufficient to recognise the danger' (FH 48). The Plottel brothers seem to count as one living whole – to injure Peter is also to harm John via the common life shared by both. Indeed, it is this sense of shared existence which motivates Peter to fight for John:

He was cleaved with fear. There were two of him: one that sat inside, behind his eyes, and knew the only way to fight but had nothing more to do with the matter once it had pointed that way out to him; and another that was the visible, touchable self, the fists he could see clenched under his eyes, the feet he stood on, the whole miserable, cowardly, agonised body that had to do the fighting but didn't want to. He felt a third being clamber out of the depths of his terror and push the trembling body forward. (FH 50)

There are initially two aspects to Peter: a frightened, instinctually-motivated, bodily self; and an intellect which can deduce appropriate means to a desired end. The end – that he should fight for his brother – is set by the ‘third being’ of his existence in a group identity.

In order to understand Friel's depiction of urban tribes we should refer to the influential work on the concept of ‘kinship’ by the Victorian Scottish anthropologists J.F. McLennan and W. Robertson Smith. McLennan perceives a ‘state of hostility’¹ between those who are not kin:

Whoever is foreign to a group is hostile to it. Even in comparatively advanced stages of savagery, groups rarely combine for common purposes; when they do – the object of the combination being accomplished – they return to their isolated independence. And when tribes have combined in nations, and the nations have become polite, it is yet some time before a distinction is drawn between strangers and enemies. No wonder if the distinction be not made by savages. Whoever is not with them is against them – a rival in the competition for food, a possible plunderer of their camp and ravisher of their women.²

Robertson Smith provides a similar analysis of social unity. Only within the kin, do individuals owe each other duties of mutual protection:

¹ John Ferguson McLennan, *Studies in Ancient History comprising a reprint of Primitive Marriage: An Inquiry into the Origin of the Form of Capture in Marriage Ceremonies* (London: Quaritch, 1876), p.106.

² McLennan, p.107.

By the rules of early society, if I slay my kinsman, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, the act is murder, and is punished by expulsion from the kin; if my kinsman is slain by an outsider I and every other member of my kin are bound to avenge his death by killing the manslayer or some member of his kin.³

These duties are motivated by a presumption that each kinsman is part of one life:

A kin was a group of persons whose lives were so bound up together, in what must be called a physical unity, that they could be treated as parts of one common life. The members of one kindred looked on themselves as one living whole, a single animated mass of blood, flesh and bones, of which no member could be touched without all the members suffering.⁴

Harm to a fellow kinsman is harm to oneself. It is this premise which, for example, motivates Peter Plottel to fight on his brother's behalf.

McLennan's 'state-of-hostility' alludes to a contractarian explanation of social existence. Let us consider, for example, Hobbes' account of the formation of society from a 'state-of-nature':

because the condition of Man, [...] is a condition of Warre of every one against every one; in which case every one is governed by his own Reason; and there is nothing he can make use of, that may not be a help unto him, in preserving his life against his enemyes; It followeth, that in such a condition, every man has a Right to every thing, even to one another's body. And therefore, as long as this naturall right of every man to every thing, endureth, there can be no security to any man, (how strong or wise soever he be,) of living out the time, which Nature ordinarily alloweth men to live. And consequently it is a precept, or generall rule of Reason, *That every man, ought to endeavour Peace, as farre as he has hope of obtaining it; and when he cannot obtain it, that he may seek, and use, all helps, and advantages of Warre.*⁵

³ W. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites: First Series: The Fundamental Institutions*, new edn (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1894), p.272.

⁴ Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, pp.273-74.

⁵ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. by Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1991), pp.91-92.

Peace is obtained by giving up absolute right in favour of more restricted, but universally held, liberties:

From this Fundamentall Law of nature, by which men are commanded to endeavour Peace, is derived this second Law; *That a man be willing, when others are so too, as farre-forth, as for Peace, and defence of himselfe he shall think it necessary, to lay down this right to all things; and be contented with so much liberty against other men, as he would allow other men against himselfe.* For as long as every man holdeth this Right, of doing any thing he liketh; so long are all men in the condition of Warre.⁶

From the mutual restriction of absolute freedom are generated all the normative permissions, prescriptions, and prohibitions of a commonwealth.

Hobbes' explanation works only if sanctions can be guaranteed to be brought against those who break the norms of their community. In light of this, the Victorian anthropologists saw kinship rituals as a superstitious supplement to everyday legality. Frazer makes this point explicitly:

by participation in the same food two men give, as it were, hostages for their good behaviour; each guarantees the other that he will devise no mischief against him, since, being physically united with him by the common food in their stomachs, any harm he might do to his fellow would recoil on his own head with precisely the same force with which it fell on the head of his victim.⁷

Thus, 'the [...] false notion of causation, has indirectly strengthened the moral bonds of hospitality, honour, and good faith among men who entertain it'.⁸ The irrational fear of magical retribution is, for Frazer, a motive which helps to make the social

⁶ Hobbes, p.92.

⁷ J.G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, abridged edn ([London(?)]: MacMillan, 1922; repub. London and Basingstoke: Pan MacMillan, 1987), p.202.

⁸ Frazer, pp.201-2.

contract binding. For Robertson Smith also, kinship is a magical solidarity, and is therefore expressed in superstitious language:

In a case of homicide Arabian tribesmen do not say, "The blood of M. or N. has been spilt," naming the man; they say, "Our blood has been spilt." In Hebrew the phrase by which one claims kinship is "I am your bone and your flesh." Both in Hebrew and in Arabic "flesh" is synonymous with "clan" or kindred group. To us all this seems mere metaphor, from which no practical consequences can follow. But in early thought there is no sharp line between the metaphorical and the literal, between the way of expressing a thing and the way of conceiving it; phrases and symbols are treated as realities.⁹

Like Frazer, Robertson Smith regards a particular kind of magical ritual as a paradigmatic means by which mutually binding relations are confirmed and extended:

Among the Arabs every stranger whom one meets in the desert is a natural enemy, and has no protection against violence except his own strong hand or the fear that his tribe will avenge him if his blood be spilt. But if I have eaten the smallest morsel of food with a man, I have nothing further to fear from him; "there is salt between us," and he is bound not only to do me no harm, but to help and defend me as if I were his brother.¹⁰

Eating together with a stranger – whom one approaches in a state-of-hostility – brings him magically into the tribal fraternity.

Friel, however, would not accept this magical analysis of kin relations. If we continue to examine his short stories then we discover an alternative account of kinship. In 'Unemployed', the protagonist, a young man who has been out of work for several years, feels oddly threatened by his performance of domestic labour:

he did little odd jobs around the house, polishing brasses, clearing the table, washing dishes and washing the windows. Sometimes he even washed the floor, and then he would sullenly

⁹ Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p.274.

¹⁰ Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, pp.269-70.

feel he was no longer a man but a creature unsexed. And when he took the ashbin downstairs to the midden in the back court he was afraid the neighbours would see him and call him 'Jessie'. (FH 85-86)

Biologically, the young man is undoubtedly male; however, he counts as an adult male not by doing domestic labour, but rather – as his mother reminds him – by earning a wage in the market:

'Twenty-six years of age!' his mother went on, standing over him with her arms akimbo. 'And it's got to be kept by two women! There's men of your age keeping a wife and family. But you, you couldn't keep yourself in matches. You don't bring a penny into the house.' (FH 89)

As his mother's use of the neuter pronoun indicates, she only recognises her son as fulfilling a masculine role if he engages in wage labour.

This demand that one perform certain actions in order to acquire a particular identity is also apparent in the attitude of the neighbourhood gossips in 'Onlookers' towards a young married couple, Mr and Mrs Gannaway. After the latter's death from tuberculosis, one side of the street is convinced that Mr Gannaway has failed to fulfil properly the role of a husband:

'He could easy have got her a better house than that,' said Mrs Stevenson, supportingly. 'A single apartment, on the money he's making in that shop! Just shows you how some folks'll put up with anything to save a shilling or two.'

'Aye, as long as they're all right,' said Mrs Higney. 'And damn the rest! And when she came back from the sanatorium, where she might have stayed in comfort, just to do her duty as a wife. Fine way he showed his appreciation, letting her stick in that pokey wee place.' (FH 81)

Mr Gannaway, they believe, has failed to assign an appropriate amount of income to his wife; and thus, he has failed in that show of appreciation appropriate to a husband.

The other side of the street, however, believe that Mrs Gannaway failed during her life to perform the duties fitting to a wife:

‘Maybe he’s better without her,’ said Mrs Lennie. ‘She had to go, sooner or later. And she was no wife to him. A wife only in name. He did all the housework. He even served her with her meals, and she slept alone on that couch every night.’ (FH 82)

For these neighbours, Mrs Gannaway cannot properly be identified as a wife without her having performed the appropriate acts of domestic labour and sexual intimacy.

Such examples suggest that Friel understands kin relations in terms of ‘recognition’ – recognition, that is, in the sense of the acknowledgement of a certain social standing. Many identities can only be attributed to a person if he or she stands in a certain relationship to another particular kind of person. For example, if Mr Gannaway is a husband then he must be a male of an appropriate age who stands in a certain kind of relation to a female of an appropriate age. And, of course, the same criteria apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to the symmetrical identity of wifhood. Such personal identities can be described formally in terms of ‘internal relations’:

If an individual X has a property which is such that, by virtue of having that property, X necessarily has a relation R to a certain thing or things, then R is an *internal relation* of X. For example, if X is a wife, then the relation of being married to someone is an internal relation of X.¹¹

The internal relation which grounds a recognised identity, however, is not primarily descriptive. Rather, such a relation is established only upon valid performance of an appropriate act of recognition. Thus, a man is established as a

¹¹ *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. Jennifer Speake (London: Pan, 1984), p.302.

husband only in a very specialised way. Both he and his partner-to-be must meet the appropriate criteria of age, gender, absence of marital status, and so on. The relationship is only then created in the performative guarantee of the marriage vows; and this speech act must still be validated by various negative and positive actions – such as abstention from adultery, the enjoyment of conjugal relations, and even, as we have seen, a certain division of labour.

It is, I believe, almost undeniable that the primitive kin-group consists similarly of individuals who mutually recognise each other. This is readily apparent in Robertson Smith's account of the origins of kinship. He informs us that although 'the Arabs attached the greatest importance to the bond created between men by eating together'¹²,

at any rate the fact that *rahim*, womb, is the most general Arabic word for kinship shews clearly enough that the argument which has led us to regard kinship through the mother as the earliest and most universal type of blood-relation is not false.¹³

The relation between nursing mother and suckling child is the earliest mark of kinship:

The suckling draws his nourishment directly from his nurse, and in fact the Arabs sometimes call milk "flesh" [...]. In this way there is a real unity of flesh and blood between foster-mother and foster-child, or between foster brothers [...]. We see, however, that the recognition of milk-kinship rather makes for than against the position that all kinship was originally through women; generally speaking the mother and nurse are one, and the bond of birth is confirmed by the continued dependence of the suckling on the nourishment that it draws from the mother's body.¹⁴

¹² W. Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*, new edn (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1907), p.176.

¹³ Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage*, p.177.

¹⁴ Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage*, p.176.

Thus, for the ancient Arabs, suckling is the act of recognition which establishes the internally related identities of mother and child; indeed, it can even establish these identities between biologically unrelated women and children. A similar act establishes the identities of father and son:

we find such a maxim as "Thy true son is he who drinks thy morning draught,"[...]. The share of the begetter in his son's blood is so little considered that the mere act of procreation does not make a bond between the father and the child to whom he has never given the morning draught [...]. The father's morning draught given to his boy acquires the same significance in constituting kinship as mother's milk had formerly done, after the weight formerly given to the bond of motherhood is transferred to fatherhood.¹⁵

The sharing of the morning draught is the action which establishes a man as the father of a child who is in turn the son of this man.

We can now appreciate the irony of Robertson Smith's assertion that 'unity of blood, as we saw in the symbolic act of drinking blood in order to create brotherhood, is to the thinking of early man no metaphor but a physical fact'¹⁶. It is only the social-contractarian, Victorian interpretation of kinship which insists that the communion ritual is essentially a magical confusion of symbol and reality. This limited interpretation is a consequence of the premises under which McLennan and Robertson Smith operate. They presuppose agents who are essentially self-contained and exist in a 'state-of-hostility' which is overcome only when each calculates that more selfish good will be obtained by submitting to what is essentially a process of exchange: one gives up absolute liberty in return for the greater value of a reduced liberty with increased physical security. In this model of society, a person is no less a

¹⁵ Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage*, pp.177-78.

¹⁶ Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage*, p.175.

person for the absence of social relations; could the threat of the external environment be practically overcome by a solitary individual, this being would still be essentially human. In terms of a theory of recognition, however, the one body of the kin-group is an intelligent and informative metaphor: every part and organ of the body is what it is only by having a real and symmetrical relation to the other parts; similarly, each individual has his identity only by virtue of mutual recognitive relations with the others of his kin.

The so-called 'savage' therefore holds to a rationally intelligible Aristotelian model of society. For the Stagyrte, man is essentially a social animal:

he who by nature and not by mere accident is without a state, is either a bad man or above humanity; he is like the

Tribeless, lawless, hearthless one,

whom Homer denounces – the natural outcast is forthwith a lover of war; he may be compared to an isolated piece at draughts.¹⁷

Furthermore, the Aristotelian polis is described in exactly the metaphor of kinship employed by the Arabian tribesmen:

the state is by nature clearly prior [...] to the individual, since the whole is of necessity prior to the part; for example, if the whole body be destroyed, there will be no foot or hand, except homonymously, as we might speak of a stone hand; for when destroyed the hand will be no better than that. But things are defined by their function and power; and we ought not to say that they are the same when they no longer have their proper quality, but only that they are homonymous. The proof that the state is a creation of nature and prior to the individual is that the individual when isolated, is not self-sufficing; and therefore he is like a part in relation to the whole.¹⁸

¹⁷ Aristotle, 'Politics', trans. by B. Jowett, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: the Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. by Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols (Princeton, New Jersey and Guildford, Surrey: Princeton University, 1984), II, pp.1986-2129 (1253a).

¹⁸ Aristotle, 'Politics', 1253a.

Friel, then, dissents from the social-contractarian model which represents society as the aggregation of essentially atomistic human beings. He is, instead, an Aristotelian who is informed by a tradition of Scottish anthropological research into the phenomenon of kinship.

Asceticism and Alienation

Kinship, however, is not only found between human beings; it is also the bond which links worshippers with their deity. I will show how Robertson Smith argues that rituals of sacrifice are essentially analogous to communion meals. I then demonstrate how, in the Christian tradition, ascetic self-mortification comes to stand as a sacrificial medium of recognition. This provides a theological background to my analysis of Christian asceticism within Friel's short stories. For Friel, the Christian's relationship with his God transforms everyday kinship relations into selfish and exploitative transactions.

We must therefore initially return to Robertson Smith. He informs us that

Primarily the circle of common religion and of common social duties was identical with that of natural kinship, and the god himself was conceived as a being of the same stock with his worshippers. It was natural, therefore, that the kinsmen and their kindred god should seal and strengthen their fellowship by meeting together from time to time to nourish their common life by a common meal, to which those outside the kin were not admitted.¹⁹

The religious communion meal is an act of recognition establishing a relation of kinship between man and supernatural entity. This becomes clearer when we take an example such as the Biblical provision of manna by which God establishes his relation to his chosen people:

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, I have heard the murmuring of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD your God. [...]. And when the dew that

¹⁹ Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p.275.

lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness *there lay* a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw *it*, they said one to another, *It is manna*: for they wist not what it *was*. And Moses said unto them, *This is* the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat.²⁰

Manna is much like the morning draught; this fortuitous provision is an act of recognition between the Heavenly Father and His children.

Robertson Smith, however, argues that the more usual form of primitive religious recognition is the regular sacrificial destruction and consumption of a living being:

when famine, plague or other disaster shows that the god is no longer active on behalf of his own, it is natural to infer that the bond of kinship with him has been broken or relaxed, and that it is necessary to retie it by a solemn ceremony, in which the sacred life is again distributed to every member of the community. From this point of view the sacramental rite is also an atoning rite, which brings the community again into harmony with its alienated god, and the idea of sacrificial communion includes within it the rudimentary conception of a piacular ceremony.²¹

As this passage implies, natural contingencies will continue to occur regardless of any religious activities. Every religion, therefore, will need to repeat sacrifice in order for the worshippers to feel a plausible renewal of their lapsed relation with their deity.

It might seem that the Christian Church neutralised the harmful potential of the need to repeat sacrifice. The self-sacrifice of Christ was a unique historical event. Kinship with God could afterwards be attained by sharing the sacred life manifested in bread and wine. As Max Weber puts it:

²⁰ *The Bible: Authorized King James Version*, ed. by Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), Exodus 16.12-15.

²¹ Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p.320.

To the Catholic the absolution of his Church was a compensation for his own imperfection. The priest was a magician who performed the miracle of transubstantiation, and who held the key to eternal life in his hand. One could turn to him in grief and penitence. He dispensed atonement, hope of grace, certainty of forgiveness.²²

Nevertheless, it is possible to see that there persists within the priestly caste a destructive form of repeated sacrifice. The holy men of Christianity are encouraged to give up their attachment to instinctual pleasures. Augustine tells us that

our body also is a sacrifice when we discipline it by temperance, provided that we do this as we ought for the sake of God, so that we may not offer our bodily powers to the service of sin as the instruments of iniquity, but to the service of God as the instruments of righteousness.²³

Asceticism therefore brings us into kinship with God: 'the true sacrifice is offered in every act which is designed to unite us to God in a holy fellowship'²⁴. The scriptural source for this doctrine occurs in the New Testament when Paul explains the acknowledgement of God afforded by asceticism:

Now the body *is* not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power. Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make *them* the members of an harlot. God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.

But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.²⁵

²² Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. by Talcott Parsons, Unwin University Books, 19 (London: Unwin University Books, 1930), p.117.

²³ Augustine, *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, trans. by Henry Bettenson ([Harmondsworth(?)]: Pelican, 1972; repr. London: Penguin, 1981), p.379.

²⁴ Augustine, p.379.

²⁵ *The Bible*, 1.Corinthians 6.13-17.

By denial of the flesh, one acknowledges God and becomes a member of a spiritual body. Even everyday embodied kinship relations are essentially derivatives of this highest recognition:

It is good for a man not to touch a woman.

Nevertheless, *to avoid* fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.²⁶

One is not a husband or a wife for its own sake: rather, this identity is a means by which weaker souls may satiate the body, and so still focus on their kinship with God – ‘if they cannot contain, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn’²⁷.

If we return to ‘Brothers’, then we may note that Peter sees himself as allied with the Christian God:

‘Kill the papish bastard!’

The words maddened him beyond discretion. To avenge himself for them, he rushed in against the lead of McAuchan’s left, blindly ignoring the sparring paw that was meant to make him keep his distance. He did not care how much punishment he took so long as he hit McAuchan hard enough and often enough to draw blood. He was a damned soul, struggling amid alien powers in darkness, and he had to achieve redemption by blood. Only blood could wash away the insult. (FH 51)

The McAuchanites are particularly offensive to Peter because they challenge the idiom promulgated by the ascetic religious caste:

The very language McAuchan used frightened him, and his Catholic prejudices were shocked at his opponent’s irreverent invocation of the Son of God. He scowled, trying hard to look a fighter, and he remembered Sister Agnes, taking his class for religious instruction during Holy Week, telling once again the story of the soldiers coming to seize Our Lord in the Garden of

²⁶ *The Bible*, 1.Corinthians 7.1-2.

²⁷ *The Bible*, 1.Corinthians 7.9.

Gethsemane with lanterns and torches and weapons. And when he said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth, and Jesus said unto them, I am he.

'Notice,' said Sister Agnes, 'Our Lord did not say I am him, because that's bad grammar. He said I am he, because the verb to be takes the same case after it as before it.' (FH 49-50)

The ethic of this religious community can be further articulated by examining the contrasting appeal of the McAuchanites. Peter is attracted to Shoe's gang because he cannot find enough work to fill up his free time:

In the long summer holidays he had nothing to do all day after he had delivered the milk in the mornings. He was bored, and would rather have been back at school. Sentenced again to the tenements for the dreary summer, he borrowed books daily from the public library beyond the Stinkie Burn and counted the empty weeks still ahead. (FH 46)

He is looking for some kindred with whom to waste time and expend energies unclaimed by work:

The blue sky between the remote roofs of the tenements coaxed him out of *King Solomon's Mines* one morning, and he wandered across the main road to the level waste ground in the hinterland of the backstreets, an aimless vitality urging him to action. (FH 46)

Peter's eventual rejection from, and victory over, Shoe and his gang is therefore also a success for the prudent term-time fellowship who work hard, do well at school, and speak properly.

This association between Christian asceticism and an ethic of efficiency is extended in the short story 'Clothes'. Peter Plottel's teacher, Miss M'Kernan, notices the ragged state of his clothes, and tells him to have his mother complete and dispatch a form requesting new garments from the Glasgow Education Authority. Mrs Plottel and some of her children are then summoned to receive its provision. The children,

however, feel ambivalent about their new clothes. The narrative ends as Peter's doubts turn to humiliated loathing when a teaching nun explicitly orders him to wear the clothes given to him by the Authority.

We should firstly note that Miss M'Kernan's apparent charity is not motivated by a maternal sense of compassion with the plight of the children she teaches. Though many of the class are presumably in penury, she is disturbed because Plottel is poor and clever:

The boy was the fourth of the family to come under her tuition, and since she had found every one of them clever she had made a favourite of each during his year with her. But she had noticed an increased shabbiness in them, and the condition of the latest member disturbed her benevolence. (FH 38)

Our suspicions are heightened when we notice that, underneath her apparent favouritism, there lies military efficiency: 'When evening prayers were said and the children were marching out in an orderly double line, Miss M'Kernan lightly grasped the boy's arm and wheeled him over to a corner of the room' (FH 39). This impression is confirmed when the family arrive at the Authority's headquarters. The children are to be clad in an economically bulk-purchased, durable, and unfashionable uniform:

he saw two schoolboys come back into the room to rejoin their mother. They were dressed alike in dark-grey Norfolk suits [...]. Flushed and uneasily clumsy in the creased newness of the old-fashioned suits and heavy thick-soled boots, they lumbered over to their brown-shawled mother. (FH 42)

Plottel yearns, therefore, for his old clothes, and the genuine loving recognition they represent: 'he felt with loathing the coarse, loose-woven wool next

to his skin, and saw nothing wrong with his tattered shirt. It at least didn't tickle him in this grossly intimate way' (FH 42-43). If Peter wears the uniform demanded by the ascetic Christians, then he will separate himself from his original social class and his identity within it. He considers his plight:

The thought of appearing before his class mates in this new Norfolk suit made him feel he would rather be dead. All the dunces who couldn't get a sum right and couldn't do a composition, all the copiers who pleaded with him to let them see his jotter, all of them would get the chance to mock him. And he was rebellious against the world at the knowledge that they, for all he could despise them in the classroom, would have the superiority outside, and be free from the glaring stigma of an unfashionable suit made to a common pattern [...]. (FH 43)

His conversion is, however, inevitable. Sister Evangeline demands that he wear the garb of a disciple:

As the class-rank rounded the first landing to go on up the next flight, Sister Evangeline stood there clapping her hands rhythmically. 'Left, right, left, right,' she called firmly, her innocent eyes behind her glasses watching the discipline of the lines. Red-faced at the noise his heavy boots were making, the boy came to pass her. 'Plottel!' she called sharply, her voice loud and clear. 'The Authority gave you that jacket to put on. Put it on!' (FH 44-45)

Her next comment reveals the shared asceticism – the 'common sense' – of her coldly efficient sorority: "That's what you got the jacket for," said Sister Evangeline in a tone of chilling common sense. 'Not to carry over your arm'" (FH 45). The classroom, for Friel, is a place where teachers can attempt to draw exceptional working-class children into the ascetic practices associated with Christianity. They are to be removed from their everyday kin and transplanted into an efficient, self-disciplined, middle-class identity.

This connection between economic rationality and Christian self-mortification is a perfectly plausible representation of modern capitalist society. Weber, for example, saw ascetic Protestantism as the universalisation of priestly asceticism under the pressure of a market economy:

Waste of time is thus the first and in principle the deadliest of sins. The span of human life is infinitely short and precious to make sure of one's own election. Loss of time through sociability, idle talk, luxury, even more sleep than is necessary for health, six to at most eight hours, is worthy of absolute moral condemnation.²⁸

The bourgeois man allocates his labour in the most efficient manner possible – according, therefore, to the most profitable opportunity:

if that God, whose hand the Puritan sees in all the occurrences of life, shows one of His elect a chance of profit, he must do it with a purpose. Hence the faithful Christian must follow the call by taking advantage of the opportunity. "If God show you a way in which you may lawfully get more than in another way (without wrong to your soul or to any other), if you refuse this, and choose the less gainful way, you cross one of the ends of your calling and you refuse to be God's steward, and to accept His gifts and use them for Him when He requireth it: you may labour to be rich for God, though not for the flesh and sin."²⁹

As a corollary to this fateful working of the market economy, the Puritan has also 'the comforting assurance that the unequal distribution of the goods of this world was a special dispensation of Divine Providence, which in these differences, as in particular grace pursued secret ends unknown to men.'³⁰ Weber adds, with reference to predestinarian sects, 'The analogy between the unjust (according to human standards) predestination of only a few and the equally unjust, but equally divinely ordained,

²⁸ Weber, pp.157-58.

²⁹ Weber, p.162.

³⁰ Weber, p.177.

distribution of wealth, was too obvious to be escaped.³¹ The contingencies of the market expressed the will of God, and were therefore an index of the individual's grace. In modernity, the prosperity achieved through economic rationality becomes the equivalent of the manna from heaven which betokens a renewed kinship with God.

'A Rainy Day' depicts the corruption of secular kinship by this ethic of economic efficiency derived from Christian asceticism. The protagonist, Mr Morrison, because of his low income, feels unworthy to bond with his family in acts of generosity. After an argument with his mother-in-law, he goes out drinking with friends. This intoxicating situation rekindles his desire for his wife by freeing him from his need for efficient productivity. Unfortunately, he sobers up before he can smooth things over with her, and ends up attempting to punish her for an apparent failure to fulfil her wifely duties. She, however, resents this depersonalisation, and his advances end in violence.

Mr Morrison disapproves of any inefficient use of resources within his family. When his mother-in-law calls round, he resents direct communion with this parasitic guest: he is 'irritated to see her uninvited haste in making herself at home' (FH 106) and later resentfully tells her, "I might as well be keeping you, the number of times you come here to be fed" (FH 108). This contrasts with his wife's hospitable readiness to spend unproductively in establishing fellowship through a shared meal: "For goodness sake hold your tongue, John! You know perfectly well we don't grudge mother the little we can give her" (FH 108). To Mr Morrison, his mother-in-law is merely a sponger who prevents his wife from receiving her proper entitlements:

³¹ Weber, p.281, n.102.

“Some men could keep a wife all right if they weren’t keeping her mother too” (FH 108). His mother-in-law can only fight back – within the ethic of efficiency – by highlighting his deficient income: “Oh, so you do keep me, you do say you keep me?” said Mrs Campbell in a tone strangely triumphant’ (FH 108). If Mr Morrison admits to keeping Mrs Campbell, then he also admits he is unable to keep his wife properly – and, therefore, that her domestic labour is imprudently allocated. In particular, he is unable to give his wife her holiday entitlement. It is this duty which his mother-in-law is keen to emphasise: “there’s nobody can say Mr Campbell couldn’t keep a wife. Mr Campbell could always give his family a fortnight at the coast every summer – unlike some folk” (FH 107).

Mr Morrison, however, has an escape from his domestic orientation towards utilitarian exchange: ‘In the company of his old friends, he would not have to spend much, not even his equal share’ (FH 105). Unfortunately, he cannot find these companions, and so ends up with some others, of whom ‘the knowledge that they would expect him to pay his fair share inhibited him from being at all responsive when they made a space for him with the loud cordiality of intoxication’ (FH 111). Nevertheless, he soon manages to overcome ‘his worry about how much he was spending’ (FH 111) and is ‘willing to stand another round for the sake of hearing more anecdotes’ (FH 112). When he is drunk he is able to disregard his mania for productivity and can allow himself to take part in the wasteful expenditure of kinship rituals in the pub. He returns home, then, able to accept the conjugal relations which establish his identity as a husband without concern for whether he gives his wife enough in return for her domestic labour.

Mrs Morrison, however, is not at home and he has forgotten his key. He gradually sobers up, and becomes enraged by this dereliction of her domestic duty: 'He waited in the shelter of the tenement-close [...]. Slowly the affection and tenderness which had coloured his desire for his wife faded, leaving only a growing rage that she to whom he had hurried was not immediately available' (FH 112). He therefore punishes her for this breach of contract so that he can appropriate her sexually: 'his anger increased as he followed her into the dark and silent house' (FH 114); 'until he released it all against her he was not free to approach her' (FH 114). And so: 'With an uncontrollable rage against her tranquillity, he grabbed her by the shoulders and shook her violently. When she struggled at once to free herself, he tried to draw her into him' (FH 115). His wife, understandably, refuses to accept this chastisement as part of his love-making:

they wrestled halfway round the room until she stumbled against a chair and knocked it over. Warmed with excitement, he felt the power of his sexual mastery over her grow stronger within him even as her body slipped from his hands. For a moment he too lost his balance and almost fell on top of her. But as she came on her knees beside the overturned chair, he recovered himself and swayed clumsily over her, gazing stupidly down at her dishevelled panic and panting loudly. (FH 115)

The climax to his passion is his wife 'coming' on her knees. Without drunkenness to free him from his antipathy to wasteful expenditure, he desires merely to exploit her as an instrument of sexual gratification.

We can now properly appreciate the effects of Christian asceticism upon the world of everyday kinship. Let us take the communion meal as a paradigm for rituals of recognition. The identities achieved by the participants are, as it were, carried upon an instinctual medium – namely, the satisfaction of hunger. A similar point can, of

course, be made about sexual gratification. It, too, is often the medium upon which identities are carried. Nevertheless, it is possible to see how these acts of recognition might be corrupted. One might share in a meal purely to satisfy one's appetite, or one might have sex only for pleasure. This reduction of the relation of kinship to mere utilitarian exchange is, as we have seen, the intellectual content of the social-contractarian analysis. The actual will to live in this alienated way, though, is given by ascetic Christianity and its secular derivatives. If the only true kinship is with God then there is a denigration of everyday instinctuality as mere lustfulness. We will recall, for example, the Pauline doctrine that 'it is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.' Men and women who cannot sufficiently remove themselves from everyday kinship are invited to satiate their flesh in lifelong contracts for the mutual employment of each other's genitals. The doctrine of the illusoriness of secular recognition is a means by which instinctual media may be stripped of their recognitive meaning. This, then, is the source of Friel's scorn for the ascetic ideal: it speciously justifies an ethic of selfish gratification in personal relations.

The alienation of sexuality is the theme of 'You Can See It For Yourself'. Plottel, a young student, is puzzled by the desire of his girlfriend, Anna Garshin, to leave home and earn her own living. He nevertheless assists her in this action, but Anna finds herself unable to survive on her wages even in the cheapest of lodgings. She returns home, having revealed to Plottel that her mother is a prostitute, and he accompanies her for what is intended to be a cosy hearthside reunion. Their hope is, however, futile: the evening is rudely interrupted when Mrs Garshin leaves them to attend to one of her clients.

The guiding metaphor of Friel's story is that of 'balance'. Everyone has to earn at least as much as they spend so as to justify the use of scarce resources in maintaining their labour power. Only when this necessity is met, can there be room for those everyday rituals – such as eating together – which establish reciprocal identities between kin. Plottel hopes that he and Anna can be sheltered from economic imperatives by his 'few shillings balance'; both can be enough in the black to come into a secondary sexual communion:

Worldpleased with the foreclaimed wealth of examination fees and a few shillings balance in his pocket, he stood in shelter at seven o'clock, and easily conscious of the triumph of circumstances he was content she had nothing burdening her and nothing to burden him. (FH 2)

Anna, however, is in a difficult position. There is insufficient demand for her in the normal labour market, and Plottel cannot afford to keep her: even with her job and his exam fees to help her, he is forced to conclude that "if you stay here any longer, you'll just fade away. You can't afford to stay in lodgings with fifteen shillings a week" (FH 3). But if Anna returns home, she will still have to work in order to help maintain both herself and her mother. The Garshin household is only in the black, we gather, if there are two working women supporting it: we should notice, for example, how Anna informs Plottel that "I meant to go round again to her [Mrs Garshin] tonight, but I don't like going empty-handed; she hadn't a penny in the house when I saw her" (FH 4). Given that Anna could hardly afford lodgings when in normal work, then prostitution is the only way she will be able to contribute enough to her mother's household. This hypothesis is supported by the testimony of Friel's friend, James Gillespie:

The girl, and the incident, were 'real'. She was Ann, who was a waitress in the old Student's [sic] Union in the 30's. G. fell for her, rather badly, and they went out together now and then. She turned out to be the daughter of a prostitute, keen to have Ann 'on the game' too.³²

Anna must return home – she has no other option. Accordingly, she looks forward to achieving the economic balance necessary to communion with her mother: "I know what we'll do. A shilling for cakes and things for tea. Then another shilling for cigarettes – mother likes a cigarette occasionally. And – well, I'll put in my three shillings too, and we'll take her a drink" (FH 5). Presented with this show, Plottel anticipates a re-affirmation of kinship between Anna and her mother: "The girl held out the cakeplate, smiling and affectionate. Genuinely affectionate, thought Plottel: there was the bond of blood and a common past between them" (FH 6). This pretence is shattered by the arrival of a 'customer':

The motherward smile in her eyes became a hostile state of fear. Someone was knocking at the door, quietly, familiarly. Mrs Garshin was startled and flushed; touching her hair headbowed she left them. They heard her movement at the front door, her low response to a man's parched voice, then footsteps to the bedroom at the rear. (FH 6-7)

And so the cup which symbolises the internally related identities of mother and daughter is spilled: "Plottel looked obliquely at the girl. She snatched a handkerchief from her sleeve, shouldering his regard. The heedless movement knocked her cup over" (FH 7). Anna's return to this household brings her into an alliance with her mother motivated by economic considerations. This business arrangement prevents her sexuality from being a medium of recognition with which to establish an identity

in relation to her partner. She is instead made the means by which well-off men can gratify their sexual instincts. Anna, in such circumstances, can be neither a daughter nor a lover.

We find then, that Friel's depiction of Scottish society is informed by the anthropological account of kinship relations. These relations, for Friel, are alienated when acts of recognition come to be ends in themselves, rather than the means by which an identity is established. Communion is turned into nutrition, and love into sex, by the Scottish culture of latent Christian asceticism. Thus, despite the apparent immersion of Friel's characters in society, they tend to be lonely and alienated individuals for whom kinship is without meaning.

³² James Gillespie, Letter to Iain Cameron, 2 August 1986, TS, George Friel Private Papers, Acc. 8942 (ii), National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, p.4.

The Magic and Religion of the Market

Friel's characters, of course, are not complacent before this erosion of kinship by the ascetic ethos of the capitalist market. Friel, though, does not depict their responses as genuine possibilities of action. Instead, he describes a society in which the underclass comfort themselves with a variety of magical and religious responses to their alienation and exploitation.

'Mr Plottel's Benefit Concert' tells of how Mr Plottel is reduced to such a condition of poverty that he decides to organise, with the aid of his sons, a charity concert for his own benefit. Mrs Plottel's reaction to this project is informative:

'Whatever will he think of next!' cried Mrs Plottel. 'The man lives in the past. Does he really think people will pay to get into his concerts when they've got the pictures to go to? And what did he ever make out of one at the best of times anyway? Holy Mother of God, will he never learn sense? No, I suppose he'll see himself as Jack Ray, Character Comedian, to his dying day.' (FH 66)

The cinema is reducing the demand for stage performers; it can bring the cream of performers to a mass audience for more or less the same price. Mr Plottel, however, does not feel threatened by the market instability brought about by this technological innovation. Here is a passage from another short story, 'Thoughtless', in which Mr Plottel attempts to justify to his wife his extravagant expenditure on clothes:

'I've got to look smart in my business,' said Mr. Plottel, stirring his brush in the shaving mug, straightening with pride as he mentioned his business, the word alone sufficient stimulus for him again in a daydream to see himself triumphant in a glorious limelight destiny. (FH 28)

Mr Plottel is reassured by the bizarre belief that merely speaking about this anticipated good fortune is enough to bring it about.

This attitude, in which a sign alone is 'sufficient stimulus' for an expectation, is magical. We should here refer to a book which strongly influenced Friel. James Gillespie recalls: 'Richards and Ogden's *Meaning of Meaning* stands out. He soaked himself in the exposition and it became a tool for much that he read, discussed and argued (fiercely) over for the remainder of his life.'³³ Richards and Ogden explain meaning in terms of a theory of signs based upon learned behavioural adaptations. They use the example of a chicken which learns to avoid striped caterpillars after having seized one and discovered its offensive taste. They conclude:

This simple case is typical of all interpretation, the peculiarity of interpretation being that when a context has affected us in the past the recurrence of merely a part of the context will cause us to re-act in the way which we re-acted before. A sign is always a stimulus similar to some part of an original stimulus and sufficient to call up the engram formed by that stimulus.

An engram is the residual trace of an adaptation made by the organism to a stimulus. The mental process due to the calling up of an engram is a similar adaptation; so far as it is cognitive, what it is adapted to is its referent, and is what the sign which excites it stands for or signifies.³⁴

This account of reference can clearly extend to simple linguistic predications³⁵: for example, constant association between the word 'table' and the presence of an actual table could lead to an expectation of a table when the sign is used. The hearer could

³³ James Gillespie, 'Memoir of George Friel', TS, George Friel Private Papers, Acc. 8942 (I), National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, p.6.

³⁴ C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning: A Study of the Influence of Language upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and co., 1923), pp.139-40.

³⁵ However, there are severe limitations to accounts which associate the use of a sign with a particular perceptual situation; they are unable to account for the fully propositional use of language. See Ernst Tugendhat, *Traditional and Analytic Philosophy: Lectures on the Philosophy of Language*, trans. by P.A. Gerner (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1982), chs 12-13.

then check to see if there is, indeed, a table in the perceptual situation, and thereby either affirm or deny the predication.

From their account, Richards and Ogden use a triangle to represent their theory of meaning.³⁶ They assign three terms to each corner of an equilateral triangle: 'symbol', 'thought' or 'reference', and 'referent'. The symbol causes us, via past experience, to have a thought which expects the appropriate referent. Crucially, the side connecting symbol and referent is indicated by a dotted line; this is to remind us that 'between the symbol and the referent there is no relation other than the indirect one, which consists in its being used by someone to stand for a referent'³⁷. This diagram – with an important alteration – is reproduced in an article by the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski which is appended to *The Meaning of Meaning*.³⁸ In his consideration of the 'The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages', Malinowski makes an interesting distinction. In magical language use, the speaker regards the link between symbol and referent as real – accordingly the symbol-referent line is shown as solid. Magicians believe 'that a word has some power over a thing, that it participates of the nature of a thing, that it is akin or even identical in its contained 'meaning' with the thing or with its prototype.'³⁹ It is this conception of the sign which allows Mr Plottel to find the word alone 'sufficient stimulus' to assure him of his destiny – the symbolic anticipation of a state-of-affairs is enough to bring it about.

³⁶ Ogden and Richards, p.14.

³⁷ Ogden and Richards, p.15.

³⁸ Bronislaw Malinowski, 'The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages', in C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning: A Study of The influence of Language upon Thought and of The Science of Symbolism* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and co., 1923), pp.451-510 (p.492).

In order to understand better the function of magic, we should reflect further on Mr Plottel's feeling of magical affinity with the unpredictable forces of the market economy. He is confident of a co-incidental conjunction which is a necessary condition for a consequent event – he will be employed if there happens to be a sufficient demand for the talents which he can supply. Most philosophical analyses regard such connections between events as wholly accidental. Aristotle, for example, gives the following example of an event consequent upon a co-incidence:

[A] man, then, will die by disease or violence, *if* he goes out; and he will do this if he is thirsty; and he will be thirsty if something else happens [...]. For instance [...] he will be thirsty if he is eating something pungent.⁴⁰

Richard Sorabji considers and amplifies this example in order to explain Aristotle's reasoning. Let us imagine that the man becomes thirsty because he eats spicy foods, goes out to a well for water, and is killed by a group of ruffians who happen to be there at the same time:

One problem is whether we can explain the man's going to the well at exactly 2 p.m. But let us suppose that there is an explanation of this, and also an unconnected explanation of why the ruffians passed the well at exactly 2 p.m. Does it follow that there is an explanation of why the thirsty man and the ruffians went to the well *at the same time*? Or for the latter, would we need a *connected* explanation of their movements?⁴¹

The same analysis applies to co-incidences brought about by natural causation: for example, 'That the heavy rains coincided with the highest tides on some occasion

³⁹ Malinowski, 'Problem of Meaning', pp.489-90.

⁴⁰ Aristotle, 'Metaphysics', trans. by W.D. Ross, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: the Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. by Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols (Princeton, New Jersey and Guildford, Surrey: Princeton University, 1984), II, pp.1552-1728 (1027b).

could be an example of an accident lacking a cause.’⁴² For each event of a co-incidence, an explanation can be given. However, there is no explanation of why the co-incidental events should occur simultaneously. It just so happens that two or more separate causal chains issue in their effects at the same time so that something further is caused. The conjunction may be important and significant, but it is inexplicable in terms of general laws.

However, there are for many cultures, explanations of co-incidence in terms of law-like associations. As we saw with Mr Plottel, such putative explanations involve magical expectation. E.E. Evans-Pritchard presents the following example drawn from his study of the Azande:

In Zandeland sometimes an old granary collapses. There is nothing remarkable in this. Every Zande knows that termites eat the supports in course of time and that even the hardest woods decay after years of service. Now a granary is the summerhouse of a Zande homestead and people sit beneath it in the heat of the day and chat or play the African hole-game or work at some craft. Consequently it may happen that there are people sitting beneath the granary when it collapses and they are injured, for it is a heavy structure made of beams and clay and may be stored with eleusine as well.⁴³

To a Western mind, this would be pure co-incidence:

We say that the granary collapsed because its supports were eaten away by termites. That is the cause that explains the collapse of the granary. We also say that people were sitting under it at the time because it was in the heat of the day and they thought that it would be a comfortable place to talk and work. This is the cause of people being under the granary at the time it collapsed. To our minds the only relationship between these two independently caused facts is their coincidence in time and space. We have no explanation of why the two chains of

⁴¹ Richard Sorabji, *Necessity, Cause and Blame: Perspectives on Aristotle's Theory* (London: Duckworth, 1980), p.10.

⁴² Sorabji, p.18.

⁴³ E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1937), p.69.

causation intersected at a certain time and in a certain place, for there is no interdependence between them.⁴⁴

The Azande, however, can do more than simply recount this unfortunate coincidence. They have an explanation which posits an essential causation for such conjunctions:

Zande philosophy can supply the missing link. The Zande knows that the supports were undermined by termites and that people were sitting beneath the granary in order to escape the heat and glare of the sun. But he knows besides why these two events occurred at a precisely similar moment in time and space. It was due to the action of witchcraft. If there had been no witchcraft people would have been sitting under the granary and it would not have fallen on them, or it would have collapsed but the people would not have been sheltering under it at the time. Witchcraft explains the coincidence of these two happenings.⁴⁵

By witchcraft, a Zande means the malicious use of magic by some particular living person:

A witch attacks a man when motivated by hatred, envy, jealousy, and greed. Usually if he has no enmity towards a man he will not attack him. Therefore a Zande in misfortune at once considers who is likely to hate him. He is well aware that others take pleasure in his troubles and pain and are displeased at his good fortune.⁴⁶

The potential misfortunes brought on by witchcraft can, however, be warded off by magical investigation and precaution:

Since Azande believe that witches may at any time bring sickness and death upon them they are anxious to establish and maintain contact with these evil powers and by counteracting them control their own destiny. [...] Azande need not live in continual dread of witchcraft, since they can enter into relations with it and thereby control it by means of oracles and

⁴⁴ Evans-Pritchard, p.70.

⁴⁵ Evans-Pritchard, p.70.

⁴⁶ Evans-Pritchard, p.100.

magic. By oracle they can foresee future dispositions of witchcraft and change them before they develop. By magic they can guard themselves against witchcraft and destroy it.⁴⁷

Bronislaw Malinowski – whom we have already established, via Ogden and Richards, as a probable influence on Friel – is in agreement with Evans-Pritchard. Magic is nothing but the putative control of co-incidence; the native does not regard it as having a directly productive effect:

If you were to suggest to a native that he should make his garden mainly by magic and scamp his work, he would simply smile on your simplicity. He knows as well as you do that there are natural conditions and causes, and by his observations he knows also that he is able to control these natural forces by mental and physical effort. His knowledge is limited, no doubt, but as far as it goes it is sound and proof against mysticism. If fences are broken down, if the seed is destroyed or has been dried or washed away, he will have recourse not to magic, but to work, guided by knowledge and reason.⁴⁸

Magic brings about the good fortune required to supplement such efforts:

His experience has taught him also, on the other hand, that in spite of all his forethought and beyond all his efforts there are agencies and forces which one year bestow unwonted and unearned benefits of fertility, making everything run smooth and well, rain and sun appear at the right moment, noxious insects remain in abeyance, the harvest yield a superabundant crop; and another year again the same agencies bring ill-luck and bad chance, pursue him from beginning till end and thwart all his most strenuous efforts and his best-founded knowledge. To control these influences and these only he employs magic.⁴⁹

Magic provides the appropriate co-incidental conjunctions - or absence thereof - in order to ensure the success of a normal instrumental intervention in the course of nature.

⁴⁷ Evans-Pritchard, pp.148-49.

⁴⁸ Bronislaw Malinowski, 'Magic, Science and Religion', in *Science, Religion and Reality*, ed. by Joseph Needham (London: Sheldon, 1925), pp.19-84 (p.30).

⁴⁹ Malinowski, 'Magic, Science and Religion', pp.30-31.

The performance of symbolic actions is supposed to control co-incidence:

Let us realise once more the type of situation in which we find magic. Man, engaged in a series of practical activities, comes to a gap; the hunter is disappointed by his quarry, the sailor misses propitious winds, the canoe-builder has to deal with some material of which he is never certain that it will stand the strain, or the healthy person suddenly feels his health failing. What does man do naturally under such conditions, setting aside all magic, belief and ritual? [...] His nervous system and his whole organism drive him to some substitute activity. Obsessed by the idea of the desired end, he sees it and feels it. His organism reproduces the acts suggested by the anticipations of hope, dictated by the emotion of passion so strongly felt.⁵⁰

For example, 'The man under the sway of impotent fury or dominated by thwarted hate spontaneously clenches his fist and carries out imaginary thrusts at his enemy, muttering imprecations, casting words of hatred and anger against him.'⁵¹ Such action is real to the inner nature of the person:

a strong emotional experience which spends itself in a purely subjective flow of images, words and acts of behaviour, leaves a very deep conviction of its reality, as if of some practical and positive achievement, as if of something done by a power revealed to man.⁵²

This symbolic satisfaction of inner nature is also the explanation Malinowski gives of magical language in 'The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages'. Word-magic is one more form of substitute action, and this explains the phenomenon of word-realism:

whence is this magical attitude derived? [...] In studying the infantile formation of meaning and the savage or illiterate meaning, we found this very magical attitude towards words. The word gives power, allows one to exercise an influence over an object or an action. [...] The

⁵⁰ Malinowski, 'Magic, Science and Religion', pp.73-74.

⁵¹ Malinowski, 'Magic, Science and Religion', p.74.

⁵² Malinowski, 'Magic, Science and Religion', p.75.

word acts on the thing and the thing releases the word in the human mind. This indeed is nothing more or less than the essence of the theory which underlies the use of verbal magic.⁵³

Such substitutes, then, are presumed by the magician to be effective in the control of co-incidences appropriate to the desired end.

Malinowski's analysis is readily apparent in 'Mr Plottel's Benefit Concert'.

Peter, for example, has recourse to magical belief to give himself the courage to face his father. Mr Plottel asks where Peter's brothers, James and John, have gone:

'Where are the other two?' demanded Mr Plottel crossly when he arrived and found Peter alone in the empty hall.

'They went away,' answered the boy timidly, with a vague idea that if he whispered the words they would not provoke so much anger as a louder utterance. (FH 68)

The words themselves participate in the reality they describe – if spoken softly, then the state-of-affairs may be less troublesome to his temperamental father. This magic gives Peter the ability to cope with his 'fear of his father's unpredictable temper' (FH 74). Furthermore, Mr Plottel's dance is a substitute action which symbolises the struggle to keep up with the tune called by the turbulent capitalist economy:

in a few seconds he was dancing frantically to keep up with the music, interspersing acrobatics with his tap-dancing, leaping and bounding and turning somersaults, kicking his heels together and chasing after the music, which seemed always on the point of shaking him off and leaving him far behind. (FH 72)

Friel re-employs the metaphor central to 'You Can See It For Yourself'. Mr Plottel magically affirms the ability to balance one's books even in an unstable labour market:

⁵³ Malinowski, 'Problem of Meaning', p.490.

Mr Plottel got there just in time, his right foot and torso forward, his left leg flung behind him, his arms stretched sideways. His position was one of unstable equilibrium, and he appeared to be in imminent danger of falling over the edge of the stage, but with an agile recovery he leapt in the air and came lightly down, his feet together, his hands by his side, and bowed to his audience. They applauded him loudly and lengthily. (FH 73)

Mr Plottel supplements this magical ritual with behaviour which is latently religious. He sees himself, in an animistic fashion, as favoured by the providence apparent in the weather:

On the Sunday of the Concert it rained all morning, but by twelve o'clock the raindrops were falling weakly as if tired of their task, and the afternoon was dry and mild. Mr Plottel's mood, morose in the morning, cleared with the sky, and by teatime he was happily singing old music-hall ballads, convinced that the weather had improved solely for his benefit. (FH 67)

This good weather is, to Mr Plottel, an omen that he is favoured by destiny and that his 'benefit' will therefore also receive good fortune in the ever unstable capitalist market. This providentialism is emphasised by the references in the story to Christian communion. The Plottel sons are their father's apostles: 'after school hours Peter, James and John gave out the word of their father in the wilderness of the tenements' (FH 67). They even bring sacramental materials for Mr Plottel's performers:

Provisions for his artistes were carried out to the Masonic Halls by the Three Apostles, who went ahead of their father after tea. Peter carried a crate of twelve bottles of beer, James carried two dozen cakes on a shallow tray covered with brown paper, and John carried a half-bottle of whisky and a half-bottle of port. (FH 67-68)

The public 'flock' are to add their own contribution via the plate:

‘Put the plate out for the silver collection,’ said Mr Plottel. ‘You’ll have to watch it by yourself. I’ve a lot to do. Put it on the table just inside the front door, and don’t leave it till I tell you. And here! Put these on the plate. The public are sheep. Kid them along a bit.’ (FH 68)

The public’s donation makes them part of a congregation, and therefore also able to benefit from Mr Plottel’s money-dance.

We might expect Friel to present such magical and religious beliefs as peculiar to the dispossessed and poorly-educated urban underclass. This, however, is not the case. Friel also depicts revolutionary political ideology in a similar fashion. Indeed, he sees such belief-systems as essentially allied to the alienating capitalist ethos of utility and efficiency. In ‘A Friend of Humanity’, for example, the goal of political history is the extermination of the inefficient damned by the efficient elect. The story tells of an idealistic young man, Mr Glanders, who, after leaving the army, trains to be a teacher. His class rebel against his approach and, in response, he assaults one of his pupils.

Glanders is selected as a teacher not so much for the content of his beliefs, as for the manner of their expression:

while the director noted the breadth and pitch of the vowels, the vigour of the consonants and the rate and diction, the candidate went earnestly on.

The accent was passable, the director decided, and although the speaker would never entirely lose his more subtle variances from standard English, the class in phonetics would make him sufficiently alert to avoid obvious errors when he was speaking for show. (FH 152)

Mr Glanders – like Sister Agnes in ‘Brothers’ – is employed to pass on the standardised dialect of the middle-class. A child who acquires this kind of speech indicates his or her willingness to become kin with the ascetic tribe. He or she would not be a working-class Ephraimite to the middle-class Gileadites, but rather would

attempt to pronounce correctly the appropriate shibboleths.⁵⁴ It is against this privileged dialect that Glanders' class direct their surplus energies. Bored into 'remote inattention' by his 'magnificent peroration' (FH 154), they pick away at the prestigious speech of the elect by pointing to the arbitrariness of linguistic signs. Hooper facetiously pretends that there is a real relation between all the homonyms of 'Glanders': his dictionary "says glanders: a malignant, contagious and fatal disease of horses" (FH 156). His teacher's response is swift and angry:

'Put that book away and be sensible,' Mr Glanders ordered fiercely. 'The lowest form of wit is to make fun of somebody else's name. Would you think it funny if I said a hooper was a wild swan? Hooper is a name for a kind of a swan. Did you know that?' (FH 156).

He has, however, only given Hooper the opportunity to ask if there is an onomatopoeic link between sign and referent:

'No sir, I think that's very interesting,' Hooper replied gratefully. 'Is that because it goes *whoop*?'

He gave an abrupt loud whoop that made everybody jump, and waited for an answer. (FH 156)

The class refuse to acquire the magical language of the ascetic tribe. Accordingly, Glanders understands their behaviour as a refusal to recognise him as a supernaturally inspired leader:

He felt something flow from him, a magic and a power he could not regain, perhaps had never had, felt as it may be an Ashanti chieftain feels when for some failure his tribe pull him off the royal stool and de-sanctify him by making him touch the common earth with his holy rump. (FH 155-56)

⁵⁴ *The Bible*, Judges 12.6.

He therefore concludes that the boys are his inferiors:

The thought suddenly arose, making it all clear and absolving him from blame, that these were not boys of the right kind at all; they were boys who didn't deserve his genial rule of reason. First they must become enlightened and then they would deserve the freedom he had planned for them. (FH 157)

They do not belong to his rationally articulate tribe, and so they must be coerced and intimidated into disciplined behaviour: 'from now on, they were at war, and, turning from Hooper for a minute, he directed the heavy artillery of his insults and threats against the rest of the class' (FH 157). In both the French Revolution and the schoolroom, Glanders therefore perceives inevitably 'the necessity for the reign of terror' (FH 154).

This interpretation can be elaborated by reference to the article 'Rousseau and Modern Marxism' which Friel wrote for the *Freethinker* under the pseudonym of 'Thomas Buchanan'.⁵⁵ Glanders holds to a doctrine of the 'general good':

He was (he told the lecturer in political philosophy) wholeheartedly in favour of liberty and the free state, but it was the place of the teacher to educate the child to liberty, and a state could not be free if its children were not properly educated, that is, trained to act in accordance with the general good of mankind. (FH 153)

This is essentially Rousseau's conception of the 'general will' as described by Friel:

⁵⁵ This reference was acquired from Iain Cameron, 'A George Friel Bibliography', in 'George Friel: an introduction to his life and work' (unpublished MLitt thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1987), pp.261-266 (p.262).

The will of the sovereign is the "general will," which is always right and is not discovered from governmental deliberation. The body politic has absolute power over all its members, and the sovereign is the sole judge of what is good for the community. This leads to Rousseau's conception of men being "forced to be free"; if the individual will conflicts with the "general will," the individual shall be forced to conform.⁵⁶

Rousseau's doctrine differs from Glanders' only in that the sovereign is the instrument of a fully Christian divine will. Rousseau demands faith in progress towards salvation both in this world and the next, and woe betide those who alienate themselves from his soteriological community:

Rousseau [...] declared he would banish from the community all who did not believe in God and a future state of rewards and punishments, and he proposed the death-penalty for anyone who after making the required profession of faith appeared to hold it no longer.⁵⁷

Glanders merely considers himself the well-disciplined tool of an historical progression confined to the phenomenal world.

'Before I've done with them, they'll have a good grasp of the nature of the modern world. They'll be able to take their place in it and carry on the fight for peace and freedom and the general good of mankind.' (FH 153-54)

However, as Glanders' vocabulary suggests, Friel does not regard secular soteriology as confined to Rousseauism:

the deterioration of Marxism into a dogmatic system has been proceeding for a quarter of a century: and that it no longer presents even a semi-rational doctrine is placed beyond dispute by Mr. Siroky's announcement: "For a Communist there is one rule that must always be observed: unreserved confidence in the Soviet Union."⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Thomas Buchanan [George Friel pseud.], 'Rousseau and Modern Marxism', *Freethinker*, 29 July, 5 August 1951, pp.270-71, 281-82 (p.270).

⁵⁷ Buchanan, p.270.

⁵⁸ Buchanan, p.281.



Marxism has also become a magico-religious belief system. The unreserved confidence of the Marxist is a faith in the inevitability of an outcome that is, in fact, historically contingent:

A degree of confidence may be attained after considering the evidence in favour of having it, but the confidence itself remains a mental act of a peculiarly private character. To be unreserved in [sic] would have to be independent of reason and evidence, of time and place, of every factor that makes confidence anything more than an act of faith. Unreserved confidence implies a supernatural immutability in the object in which we are to have confidence; it precludes any revision of our judgement; it obviates any need to understand why we have confidence in it at all; it is, in short, unreserved.⁵⁹

Marxist historical expectations are therefore secular analogues to the Christian faith in salvation for those who are sufficiently repentant: ‘The Pope has not asked more from the faithful; and when a Catholic priest informs us that “what the world needs to-day is more childlike faith” [...], he is asking for the same mental attitude as Mr. Siroky.’⁶⁰

‘Blackleg’ continues this magico-religious portrayal of class warfare. It tells of Andrew Bulloch, a tram-driver whose wife holds middle-class aspirations for her family. When the General Strike is declared, Bulloch continues to work and, accordingly, receives a visit from three union officials – Mr Hannah, Mr Todd, and Mr Porter. They harass and intimidate him, and, though unable to compel him to the picket line, they do manage to steal his uniform. Due to the stress of such ostracism, Mr Bulloch dies a couple of weeks later from heart failure. By then, the General Strike has failed.

⁵⁹ Buchanan, p.281.

⁶⁰ Buchanan, p.281.

Friel understands that the striking worker is always at a disadvantage. The ‘commodity’ which he withdraws from the market is alive, and dependent for its life upon its sale:

when the first excitement faded and a housewife here and there began to wonder if the Strike was a wise thing, the husband briefly scorned her nagging worries about his job and the children and food. Determination fluctuated. (FH 57)

As the modern sociologist Claus Offe reminds us: ‘labour power, continuously dependent on the supply of the means of subsistence which can only be acquired through its ‘sale’, is not (or only within very narrow limits) in a position to ‘wait’ for favourable opportunities.’⁶¹ Thus, ‘as a result, it is structurally compelled to extensively relinquish its own strategic options, to submit to any presently given conditions of demand, and to accept the going wage it is offered.’⁶² Friel perceives what Offe terms a dependence ‘upon the *continuous* flow of *adequate* means of subsistence’⁶³, and this, for Friel, is the fatal weakness of industrial action.

This analysis is particularly relevant to Bulloch’s economic position: “I’ve a wife and family to keep!” (FH 60) is his repeated answer to the accusations of Todd and Porter. However, Bulloch’s practical response to this dilemma – “you can’t keep me from my job” (FH 60) – singles him out; unlike other working-class households, his family’s subsistence is wholly provided by his job. This difference is due to his wife who is ‘ladylike’ (FH 63) and is, we might imagine, unlikely to have a part-time

⁶¹ Claus Offe, ‘The Political Economy of the Labour Market’, trans. by Karen Grislis and Raymond Morrow, in *Disorganized Capitalism: Contemporary Transformations of Work and Politics*, ed. by John Keane (Cambridge and Oxford: Polity in association with Basil Blackwell, 1985), pp.10-51 (p.17).

⁶² Offe, p.17.

menial job such as charring. Her aspirations also prevent her children from entering the margins of the labour market:

She meant them to go to the university [...] and become doctors or engineers or schoolmasters, and with that high ambition she didn't like them to play with the other children who would leave school at fourteen and become errand-boys. (FH 55)

If we examine Friel's description of the non-unionised employees then we discover that a significant number of them are these marginal workers who help to support the households of working-class male union members: 'the pavements were crowded with office-girls, shop-girls, clerks and message-boys, righteously walking to their work' (FH 56-57). Bulloch, however, has no share in such income; he cannot, like the other men, use the wages of strike-breaking family members to support himself during the strike.

Because of this latent contradiction in the withdrawal of labour by union members, Friel does not represent the General Strike as a practical attempt to create a society free from class division. He instead portrays it as simply a moment in which the dispossessed can briefly cohere into an army with a magical confidence in their eventual victory over the currently dominant class. We should here be aware of Friel's familiarity with the work of J.G. Frazer. His knowledge of *The Golden Bough* is asserted in a late unpublished poem quoted by Iain Cameron:

You can't bequeath that you have read
The Elizabethan dramatists,
The French and Russian novelists,
Kant and Hegel, Marx and Freud,

⁶³ Offe, p.17.

The Golden Bough, that you enjoyed
Voltaire and John M. Robertson.⁶⁴

Frazer's description in *The Golden Bough* of 'The Roman Saturnalia' is of particular interest:

no feature of the festival is more remarkable, nothing in it seems to have struck the ancients themselves more than the license granted to slaves at this time. The distinction between the free and the servile classes was temporarily abolished. The slave might rail at his master, intoxicate himself like his betters, sit down at table with them, and not even a word of reproof would be administered to him for conduct which at any other season might have been punished with stripes, imprisonment, or death. Nay, more, masters actually changed places with their slaves and waited on them at table [...]. So far was this inversion of ranks carried, that each household became for a time a mimic republic in which the high offices of state were discharged by the slaves, who gave their orders and laid down the law as if they were indeed invested with all the dignity of the consulship, the praetorship and the bench.⁶⁵

'Blackleg' depicts a parallel inversion of ranks: 'the trams [were] driven by university students enjoying their voluntary task as an exciting adventure' (FH 56), while 'for the first time, politics had become something important to the women and girls in the conglomeration of back-streets and the two-roomed tenements of the main roads' (FH 57).

The labour force magically conceal from themselves the inevitable failure of the strike's Saturnalian inversion. Let us consider Frazer's account of the premises behind scapegoating: 'the evil influences are embodied in a visible form or are at least supposed to be loaded upon a material medium, which acts as a vehicle to draw them off from the people, village, or town.'⁶⁶ In 'Blackleg', the kin-group which expels

⁶⁴ Cameron, p.18.

⁶⁵ Frazer, p.583-84.

⁶⁶ Frazer, p.562.

Bulloch is that formed by 'the local branch of the Transport Workers' Union' (FH 58):

'You miserable traitor,' said Mr Todd, with cold venom. 'The whole working-class is solid in this fight, except for a few scabs like you. Well, you're chucking it, do you hear? You're chucking it!' (FH 60)

Bulloch is like a sore upon the collective body of the strikers – he must therefore be excised before he damages the whole organism. As the union men intimidate him, they regard him as if he were infectious:

Mr Hannah released his grasp and pushed him contemptuously on the chest with both hands. Mr Bulloch swayed and sagged backward against Mr Todd. As if contaminated, Mr Todd pushed him forward again, and he fell at Mr Hannah's feet in a faint. (FH 61)

By expelling this dirty matter from their corporate body, the strikers give themselves and their families a brief magical faith that history will grant them victory as the reward for their long-endured self-sacrifice. Thus, we find that the working-classes display an inverted secular soteriology:

They were hysterical when they talked of the Strike, loud-voiced in a determination to support it to the end, proclaiming that at last there was an open fight between the callous rich and the long-suffering poor.

'Class against class, that's what it is,' said Mrs Houston to Mrs Higney. 'Those communist fellows are not so very wrong when you think of it. It's up to us to stick together.' (FH 57)

Their doctrine of salvation is still one in which the chosen are those who work hardest. It is merely that the 'long-suffering poor' regard themselves as the only authentic workers; labour – as opposed to capitalist exploitation – is, for them, the

one true creator of value. Even though they remain outside the middle-class, the trade-unions still aspire to an ascetic kinship and soteriology: history will redeem the hopes of the dispossessed who, by being precisely a working class, are assured of their salvation.

The comparison of Marxism with religion may seem obscure – did not Marx himself understand that the bourgeoisie had a basically religious relation to the fluctuations of the capitalist economy? He declared, after all, in his analysis of ‘commodity fetishism’, that ‘a commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men’s labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour’.⁶⁷ Marx, however, promises us that there is a law-like association behind the apparently co-incidental relations of supply to demand which determine price:

in the midst of all the accidental and ever fluctuating exchange-relations between products, the labour-time socially necessary for their production forcibly asserts itself like an over-riding law of nature. [...] The determination of the magnitude of value by labour-time is therefore a secret, hidden under the apparent fluctuations in the relative values of commodities.⁶⁸

It is Marx’s belief that the ratio between the prices of commodities tends towards the ratio between the labour-times socially necessary for the production of each.

It is this order which the capitalist breaches in his employment of the worker. Marx sees exploitation arising in the discrepancy between the labour that the worker must do to keep alive for a day and the labour that the worker can do in a day. For

⁶⁷ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production*, ed. by Frederick Engels, trans. by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, 3 vols (London: Swan Sonnenschein, Lowrey, 1889; repr. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1938), I, pp.42-43.

⁶⁸ Marx, p.46.

example, the capitalist may pay the worker for the six hours labour necessary to earn a day's subsistence, yet work him for twelve hours:

The owner of the money has paid the value of a day's labour-power; his, therefore, is the use of it for a day; a day's labour power belongs to him. The circumstance, that on the one hand, the daily sustenance of labour-power costs only half a day's labour, while on the other hand the very same labour-power can work during a whole day, that consequently the value which its use during one day creates, is double what he pays for that use, this circumstance is, without doubt, a piece of good luck for the buyer [...].

[...] The labourer therefore finds, in the workshop, the means of production necessary for working, not only during six, but during twelve hours.⁶⁹

And thus, according to Marx, the capitalist's profit arises out of his theft of such surplus-value – in this case, that which would accrue to six hours of labour.

The assumption that the labour theory of value actually expresses itself in the economy founds Marx's account of capitalist exploitation. From it flows an anticipation that the proletariat will win socialised control of the increasingly monopolised means of production and so overcome the exploitation of their labour:

The capitalist mode of appropriation, the result of the capitalist mode of production, produces capitalist private property. This is the first negation of individual private property, as founded on the labour of the proprietor. But capitalist production begets, with the inexorability of a law of Nature, its own negation. It is the negation of negation. This does not re-establish private property for the producer, but gives him individual property based on the acquisitions of the capitalist era: i.e., on co-operation and the possession in common of the land and of the means of production.⁷⁰

So, according to Marx, there comes about an economy in which wages directly express the value created by the labourer.

⁶⁹ Marx, p.175.

⁷⁰ Marx, p.789.

The labour-theory of value, however, has little to do with capitalist society.

Adam Smith finds it plausible only for very primitive economies:

In that early and rude state of society which precedes both the accumulation of stock and the appropriation of land, the proportion between the quantities of labour necessary for acquiring different objects seems to be the only circumstance which can afford any rule for exchanging them for one another. If among a nation of hunters, for example, it usually costs twice the labour to kill a beaver which it does to kill a deer, one beaver should naturally exchange for or be worth two deer.⁷¹

In such a society, most exchanges will be governed by a rough commensuration of the time, energy and acquired skill involved in the production of each commodity. However, as Smith's statement implies, there are two factors in a modern commodity which make a labour theory of value impossible. The first is rent, which is a production cost which has no necessary relation to labour expended by the landlord:

As soon as the land of any country has all become private property, the landlords, like all other men, love to reap where they never sowed, and demand a rent even for its natural produce. The wood of the forest, the grass of the field, and all the natural fruits of the earth, which, when land was in common, cost the labourer only the trouble of gathering them, come, even to him, to have an additional price fixed upon them. He must then pay for the license to gather them; and must give up to the landlord a portion of what his labour either collects or produces.⁷²

The landlord receives commodities – or money to buy them with – without an expenditure of labour time on his part. But even if all land were owned in common, there would still be the second factor of investment to consider in production costs:

⁷¹ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 6th edn, 2 vols (London: G. Bell, 1925), I, pp.47-48.

⁷² Smith, p.50.

As soon as stock has accumulated in the hands of particular persons, some of them will naturally employ it in setting to work industrious people, whom they will supply with materials and subsistence, in order to make a profit by the sale of their work, or by what their labour adds to the value of the materials. In exchanging the complete manufacture either for money, for labour, or for other goods, over and above what may be sufficient to pay the price of the material, and the wages of the workmen, something must be given for the profits of the undertaker of the work who hazards his stock in this adventure.⁷³

Whether I invest directly, or entrust my capital to another person to invest it for me, I take a chance on a greater amount of money later in return for not spending the money I have now. If I invest, I am given money, and thus power over the allocation of labour, not according to my own expenditure of labour power, but according to my willingness to risk my capital. Production costs must therefore reward the investor for tying up his capital and for risking its loss.

Furthermore, the very fact that investment costs are an element of production costs indicates that the capitalist market never achieves the equilibrium necessary to express any putative theory of value. One can only be a capitalist in a society where there are entrepreneurs who destabilise the market. Let us consider J.A. Schumpeter's analysis:

As a matter of fact, capitalist economy is not and cannot be stationary. Nor is it merely expanding in a steady manner. It is incessantly being revolutionized from within by new enterprise, i.e. by the intrusion of new commodities or new methods of production or new commercial opportunities into the industrial structure as it exists at any moment. [...] Every situation is being upset before it has had time to work itself out. Economic progress, in capitalist society, means turmoil. [...] In this turmoil competition works in a manner completely different from the way it would work in a stationary process, however perfectly competitive. Possibilities of gains to be reaped by producing new things or by producing old things more cheaply are constantly materializing and calling for new investments.⁷⁴

⁷³ Smith, pp.48-49.

⁷⁴ Joseph A. Schumpeter, 'Karl Marx', in *Ten Great Economists: From Marx to Keynes* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1952), pp.3-73 (pp.38-39).

An innovation in which the capitalist may invest can only succeed if there is a breach in the tendency of the market to equilibrium. Enterprise must either undercut the competition in an established market, or open up a market for a new kind of commodity. In the first case, the tendency of supply and demand to level out is disrupted and has to start all over again. In the second case, the new market, if successfully established, upsets existing markets by draining demand away from them.

Theories of value for modern economies are therefore myths which attempt to deny the endless contingencies of the ever-evolving capitalist market. The most revolutionary theory of value – the Marxist labour theory – entirely elides the fact of investment from its consideration of production costs. It is a faith in a providential order behind the market which eventually rewards not the bourgeoisie, but the labouring poor, who are presumed to be the only and ultimate producers of wealth. In the strictest sense – as we saw in ‘Blackleg’ – Marxism is a magico-religious belief, and its object, like that of the Puritan’s faith, is the unpredictable second nature of the capitalist economy. The Marxist merely differs from the Puritan by believing that the labour theory of value betokens secular salvation in a socialist utopia. Friel therefore carries his anthropological analysis further than merely an account of alienation. He sees the futile comforts of primitive magic and religion even in the more sophisticated responses advocated by those who perceive the destruction of human community.

Conclusion

Let us now summarise the results of this investigation of George Friel's short stories. Friel depicts human beings as essentially social: they need to be linked together in networks of reciprocally recognised identities. This human need, however, is threatened by the ascetic tradition which originates in Christianity and which persists as a secular orientation to economic efficiency. Even such intimate relations as husband and wife, and mother and daughter, are infected by a selfish utilitarianism which turns everyday acts of recognition into economic exchange. Kinship becomes parasitic upon a precarious economic balancing act. Accordingly, the lower classes participate in magical and religious acts designed to give them confidence that they will achieve the necessary financial balance. Their irrationality is, for Friel, no greater than the irrationality of many seemingly political responses to such alienation. Marxism, in this magical and religious context, is not a solution to class division, but is merely a secular soteriology addressed to the working-class.

TWO

TRANSCENDENTAL KINSHIP AND RECOGNITION IN THE NOVELS
OF GEORGE FRIEL**Introduction**

This chapter examines four of George Friel's novels: *The Bank of Time*, *The Boy Who Wanted Peace*, *Grace and Miss Partridge*, and *Mr Alfred, M.A.*¹ The short story 'An Angel In His House' from *A Friend of Humanity* is also analysed. In the last chapter, we saw how Friel's characters had recourse to various magical and religious rituals which reassured them of an escape – or even a salvation – from their alienated existence. Although Friel's novels are less concerned with the economic causes of alienation, they exhibit a similar pattern. His protagonists are isolated from family relations, and are unable to find friends and lovers. They therefore seek out kinship with, or through, a higher reality betokened by providential patterns of accidental causation. Such 'transcendental kinship' does not function merely as a replacement for the identity to be found in secular kin-relations. The providential relation to a higher reality may also provide a delusive substitute for the social relations which lead to greater personal authenticity.

¹ For plot summaries of these novels, consult Appendix I to this thesis.

Secular Alienation and Transcendental Kinship

The protagonists of Friel's novels have few family or friends, and lack the ability to engage in ordinary relations of communion. They therefore turn away from their everyday world of alienation, and direct themselves towards a higher realm in which, they believe, the truer kind of kinship is to be found. This transcendental kinship finds its purest form in *Miss Partridge*. Her murder of Grace, she believes, is infanticide only in terms of the phenomenal world – from a transcendent perspective, she is giving birth to Grace in Heaven. Transcendental kinship also involves an essentially providential interpretation of accidental causation. Co-incidence is understood as a means by which one is encouraged to rise above the everyday realm in order to commune with the world beyond.

The orientation to transcendental kinship begins with the alienation experienced by protagonists who are without strong ties to any kin-group. We find Percy, for example, to be ostracised by his working-class peers because of his name, and humiliated by his teacher because of his lack of academic ability:

They had said he was soft since the first day he went to school. He blamed it on his name. He hated it for years. Percy was a sloppy name. It was too uncommon in the tenements, too Kelvinside, too English, to get respect. It was worst in the qualifying class, where even the teacher made jokes about it. She kept on saying he was slow in arithmetic and backward in reading and poor at spelling and hopeless at composition. Her daily crack was to tell him he must persevere. (BP 16)

Percy is therefore also derided by the brighter children – who are too economically valuable to be denied an education:

“Well, Percy, you must Percy Vere. That’s all.”

And every day the boys and girls preparing for the eleven-plus examination laughed at the same joke and laughed at him. It was the girls’ laughter hurt him most. It fell from heaven like the merriment of angels looking down on the antics of a clod-hopper who couldn’t get his big feet out of the mud. (BP 16)

His attempt to oppose this humiliation is merely the occasion for further mockery by this elect group:

“I don’t understand why you call me Percy Vere. My name isn’t Percy Vere, it’s Percy Phinn.”

An earthquake unpredicted by the eight o’ clock weather forecast shook the class. A cyclone of laughter lifted the roof and a tornado of girlish screams whipped the walls apart. He felt himself naked to the wind and weather when he had expected to stand there proud and respected in an awed silence. He was frightened. There was never a mockery like this, clawing at him on all sides and tearing him apart to eat him up. (BP 17)

Percy is alone and without fellows from any class.

Miss Partridge feels a similar sense of alienation. Her position outside the tenement life around her is consequent upon the loss of much of her family. Initially, the death of her parents was compensated for by her extended family. She still could, as her brother, Tommy, reminds her, stand as a niece to her Auntie Kate:

“Remember Auntie Kate? [...] She used to give us a rare tuck-in remember. We took the bus all the way to her big house on a Sunday. The bus journey was half the fun. Those good old Scotch Sunday dinners. You can’t beat them. She fed us well. She fairly looked after us when Papa and Mama died. You can’t deny it, Anna.” (GP 134)

But now, only she and Tommy are left of her immediate family. He, at least, feels that ‘he couldn’t leave her to die alone. She was still his sister. The only kin he had’ (GP 133); and so,

Tommy Partridge always went to see his sister on Sunday. He would stay for an hour or two and he used to take off his jacket and roll up his sleeves and prepare a meal for them both with a couple of chops or bacon and eggs or sausages and liver he brought with him. He was sure it was the only square meal she had all week, and he told her so every time he served her. (GP 66)

As we would expect, Friel portrays this ritual as a participation in a common life: 'they were happy eating together, recalling old times, sharing each other's sorrows, sharing each other's joys, comrades' (GP 136).

Miss Partridge's greatest longing is, however, to have a relationship analogous to that which exists between mother and child. To this end, she attempts to acquire the affections of the tenement children with gifts of sweet things. McKay recalls,

she liked little girls. It was gruesome to see her sour face uncurdle to a leering sweetness when any of them came near her claws. She stroked them and squeezed them and tickled them and ruffled them, and fed them with buns and sweeties. She never ate sweets herself. She bought them just to give away to her favourites. (GP 6)

Unfortunately, almost none of the children are willing to accept these sacraments: 'They came out with their nose wrinkled, distastefully holding by the rim a piece of bread and jam or a buttered abernethy biscuit, made straight for the midden in the backgreen, and chucked Wee Annie's gift into the ashcan' (GP 6). Nevertheless, Miss Partridge hopes that Grace might provide a potential substitute for a child of her own: "'Oh dear, if I only had her all to myself! If only she was my wee girl!'" she sighed' (GP 53). She hopes to win Grace's love by inviting her to tea, but Grace is uninterested, and Shelley the parrot is unwell:

The great occasion lacked the atmosphere Miss Partridge had expected it to have; there was no intimacy, no communion, no tender preparation for her confession of love, only a wee girl eating bravely and a bird in his cage snuffling and sniffing. (GP 57)

The meal is a failure; Miss Partridge finds no 'communion' with the child.

Mr Alfred provides a more detailed depiction of such alienation. Like Miss Partridge, he has lost many of his immediate family:

He was thinking of the year he had to give up his honours course and settle for an ordinary degree. It was all because his father died suddenly and his mother mourned so much she became a bit unbalanced. He qualified quickly to get a job and bring some money into the house. Then his mother went and died too. (MA 9)

Mr Alfred's only surviving close relative is his aunt, 'Granny Lyons'. In the sharing of a dram, they recall and assert their reciprocal acts of recognition:

'To my favourite aunt,' he said.
 'The only auntie you've got now,' she replied to his toast, unflattered.
 'The only one I ever really knew. My mother's favourite sister you were. And it was you helped me when I was a student. Don't think I forget.'
 'I had money then I haven't got now.'
 'If you need any more you've only to tell me.'
 'No, you give me plenty. You shouldn't bother.'
 'I promised my mother. Anyway, I owe you it. For the time you paid my fees if nothing else.'
 (MA 15)

Mr Alfred, however, longs for wider kinship with both men and women:

it was his weakness to stand always on the fringe of company, smiling into the middle distance, happy only with a glass in his hand. He had been a wallflower since puberty. He wanted to love his fellowmen. When he was young he even hoped to love women. Now every door seemed locked, and without a key he was afraid to knock. (MA 5)

But although he visits the ideal place for rituals of communion, Mr Alfred is not part of the shared life of the pub: ‘Sometimes he thought he was making a mistake frequenting a common pub with common customers and a common barmaid when he had nothing in common with them’ (MA 5).

Mr Alfred’s alienation is depicted with a motif familiar to us from the short stories. When Granny Lyons advises him, “Get a good woman and marry her and get out of those digs you’re in.” (MA 15), he responds in the following manner:

‘I’m happier away from women,’ he said.
He elevated his glass sacramentally and plainchanted.
‘The happiest hours that e’er I spent were spent among the glasses-O!’ (MA 16)

We can clarify this response if we note that Mr Alfred’s ambivalent attraction to prostitutes is compared to his alcoholism:

He recognised her as the reason for his wandering, and he knew the trembling of his lean body when he left the cosy pub was due less to the chill of a sleety wind than to the hope of finding her. But the moment she opened her mouth and touched him he was as empty as all the glasses he had drained. (MA 7)

Sex with a prostitute, like alcoholism, would merely gratify a physical instinct stripped of its recognitive meaning.

Beer and whisky therefore satisfy the physical compulsion which attaches to Mr Alfred’s loneliness. They leave him feeling self-sufficient, and free to dream of kinship with a higher world. At Granny Lyons’, he recalls, over his whisky, ‘the small hours when he used to read poetry alone in his room and write little poems for himself. He was taken back, at peace with a glass in his hand and a verse in his head’

(MA 16). He recalls the one kin-group to which he once sought admission – a special family for people who engage in the creation of imaginary worlds:

he hunted out the typescript of his poems. It was a long time since he last looked at them. He had an alcoholic whim to read them again and enter the mind of the man he had been in the green years that had no ophidian Provan lurking in the grass. He thought he would comfort his troubled spirit by saying his own verses aloud. (MA 42)

The young Mr Alfred was, however, denied admission to the fraternity of literary artists:

The performance fell short of the intention. He was depressed to see how weak and derivative his verses sounded after lying long unread. He felt he was a failure, a lonely provincial hearing from afar rumours of the world of letters, the only world he cared about, a world he would never be allowed to enter. (MA 42-43)

His poetry was an attempt to find fellowship with this superior world:

He had called his poems *Negotiations for a Treaty*. He meant a treaty with the reality of philosophers, politicians, economists, scientists and businessmen. The thirty-two poems [...] were meant to be a lyric-sequence showing the attempt to come to terms with a material world. The poet would insist on his right to live in the independent republic of his imagination. But he would let reality be boss in its territory if it gave up all claims to invade and conquer his. (MA 42)

Those who live in the literary world of the imagination transcend the everyday world of utilitarian relations.

Mr Alfred's inability, however, to join the poetic elect does not return him to secular kin-relations. He instead understands his misfortune as just one more instance of what we might call 'corporeal punishment':

‘the tawse of the Scotch dominie is never wielded like the Jesuit’s pandybat that distressed the young Stephen Dedalus. Not that the pandybat did Joyce any harm. It gave him material. It showed him what life is like. [...] And even if a boy is strapped unjustly it isn’t fatal. Life is full of minor injustices. A boy should learn as much while he’s still at school and learn to take it without whining. I admire the heroes of history who fought against social injustice, but one of the strap given in error or loss of patience is hardly a wrong on that scale.’ (MA 35)

The strap teaches children the worthlessness of the material, corporeal world – a world where alienation from others is inevitable, and should be accepted without complaint. Mr Alfred’s search for a transcendent community therefore continues despite his failure to be confirmed as a writer. Rose provides a suitable prop for his imaginary theatre: ‘at the same time as he thought of marrying Rose in a daydream future he kept thinking of her as his daughter in the waking life of his present’ (MA 69). There is, as we might expect, a supernatural element in this fantastic escape from alienated social relations:

When he was accosted after the last pub of his nightly crawl was closed, [...], he remembered Rose and said her name aloud to the darkness. He believed she would be shocked, or at least disappointed, if she saw him go off with a woman who had to be paid. The fact that she couldn’t know what he did made no difference. She was to him like God, who knows and sees all things, even our most secret thoughts. (MA 94)

Rose’s name therefore possesses a magical authority derived from the ‘independent republic of the imagination’ – it is ‘his talisman, a pious and even apotropaic [sic] ejaculation in moments of temptation’ (MA 94). Mr Alfred is, of course, eventually deprived of even this imagined kin relation with Rose; and so he falls further into the compulsive expression of his need for a recognitive identity in the material world: ‘He took more and more to drink in the evenings. He found he had to drink more to get the right effect of not worrying about anything’ (MA 120).

As a result of this increasing alienation, Mr Alfred starts to feel that his only kinship is with the dead – who at least enjoy the peace appreciated by all book-lovers:

there was a cemetery beside the old village church. He meant to visit it some lunchtime, but procrastinated. He saw himself trying to make out the inscription on the weatherworn tombstones and going over some stanzas of Gray's 'Elegy' in his head. The library too he meant to visit. It would be peaceful there and in the cemetery. (MA 140)

His subsequent encounter with Tod absolutely assures him of the worthlessness of his bodily existence. He therefore feels that he has no essential relation to his corporeal being: 'The writing on the wall had been done by someone occupying his body in space and time, someone not identical with himself' (MA 170). Mr Alfred is alienated from his bodily existence precisely because he understands it as a location where he will always be an alien. He accordingly disavows responsibility for the pseudo-actions of his body:

while he knew he wasn't responsible for all this writing on the wall he knew he had to answer for it. He didn't mind. He was willing to answer for it. If he was pushed. This young policeman could do what he liked with him. Nothing mattered any more. (MA 170)

Mr Alfred is entirely indifferent to his material fate: 'He remembered an old word cherished in his youth when a dictionary was his bedside book. Ataraxia. The indifference aimed at by the stoics. That was all he felt.' (MA 170)

An orientation towards transcendental kinship is also Percy's reaction to alienation. The Brotherhood's first commandment is, we notice, an expression of kinship: "All for one and one for all, united we stand but divided we fall" (BP 25).

Percy uses kinship rituals to establish the internally related identities of the Brotherhood. They are, for example, sworn to secrecy by a blood-oath:

He took a safety-razor blade from his trouser pocket, a blade he carried in a metal holder, and lightly and bravely he cut the ball of his thumb.

"Kneel before me one by one," he commanded. "And repeat after me."

They came to him in single file and he bent and dabbed the blood from his thumb on their forehead.

"I promise not to tell," he incanted.

"I promise not to tell," they repeated after him. (BP 39)

This ritual gives Percy a peculiar sensation:

Percy felt the glow of inspiration. It came to him sometimes when he was instructing the Brotherhood, a warm feeling round his brow and a tingling in his scalp, and he wished it would come oftener, it was so mysterious and thrilling. (BP 39)

This tingling sensation is, literally, a feeling of recognition. It is therefore also felt by Frank Garson when he is about to be re-united with his mother: 'his mother ruffled his thick waving crop of chestnut-brown hair, [...]. Frank Garson jerked his head away, distressed. Yet his scalp tingled, and he wondered what he had to do to reach her' (BP 169).

The Brotherhood, of course, are not merely a secular fraternity. Percy believes that he owes his new-found recognitive identity to El, the deity who has bestowed upon the Brotherhood their good fortune. He must therefore regularly establish a cultic communion with the deity:

He made them all take a new and more elaborate blood-oath, and when they had taken it they had to make the sign of the El. He showed them how to do it. They drew the index finger of the right hand across the eyes from left to right, up over the brow in a loop and down the line of the nose to the chin. Then they traced another loop to the left and came back along the

jawbone and up to the right ear. The sign was completed by drawing two parallel lines across the tip of the nose and upper lip. It was the sign of the £ drawn on their face, the symbol of the god they were now to serve. (BP 47)

Their blood is used to make the symbol of El, and so, by a typical piece of magical sign-realism, their common life also comes to partake of the being of El. Those who betray this kinship face not only punishment by the Brotherhood, but also the wrath of El as expressed through misfortune:

“And if I break this oath may the Brotherhood break the bones of my thighs. If I speak of the treasure outside the cellar let my tongue be burnt with a soldering iron, and if I touch the treasure without the Regent’s permission may the hand that commits the offence be eaten by the rats in the cellar and may my arms be paralysed, withered and shrivelled till they drop off like a dead leaf from the trees in autumn.” (BP 48)

The leper is one touched by El; his illness indicates his betrayal of the common life. Similar, but more plausible, misfortunes therefore attach to other breaches of the commandments by which El recognises his worshippers:

He [Percy] declared the word “money” tabu. They were never to use it to say what was in the cellar. They were to say “El”. He told them it was the only safe word to use. The other word would give away their secret and bring a terrible punishment. He said they would all get scabies, chickenpox, dysentery and measles if they ever used it. (BP 48)

Friel’s most complete description of transcendental kinship is given, however, in the character of Miss Partridge. She is finally pushed into a desperate need for kinship with the divine by the death of her parrot. When Shelley is put down by Hugh Main, Miss Partridge feels as if she has conspired in the destruction of her own child:

Alone in her silence, without a confidant or ally, Miss Partridge felt guilt go with her for a long time afterwards. It was perhaps odd for her, but she felt like an unmarried mother who had concealed a birth and smothered her infant in a back-closet. (GP 65)

After the loss of this substitute for the mother-child relation, she comes to prefer God's community over the everyday kinship which time erodes:

"Shelley is with me now and for ever in eternity, but here and now mourning and weeping in this vale of tears I still have Grace, glory be to the Father, and I will save Grace from the death poor Shelley had to suffer, because all creatures must die." (GP 68)

She is, she believes, finally alienated from the everyday sexual and alimentary acts of recognition of which Tommy is a constant reminder:

His arms were hairy, and the anchors and mermaids tattooed on them were to her eyes an ugly emphasis of his masculine coarseness. She wanted to forget the world of matter, to escape from it, to be a disembodied spirit, hearing and seeing and thinking without being subject to the calls of nature, freed from the limitations of the flesh. To be skinny seemed to be at least part of the way there. (GP 66)

Miss Partridge is now orientated towards an identity in a world beyond this one. With this in mind, she refers to John 15.13: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (GP 69). To Tommy, this doctrine seems to refer to secular kin relations, where a part of the collective is willing to die for the sake of the whole:

the divine words gave him a picture of a brave soldier fatally holding off the Zulus or Fuzzy-Wuzzies with a jammed gatling while his comrades retreated to fight again, of a big-hearted captain giving up his place in the lifeboat, I'll stick to the ship, lads, you save your lives. (GP 69-70)

His sister, however, is directed towards a kinship in the heavens. Her reasoning begins from the premise that any child who dies is guaranteed a place in Heaven: ““Take an infant,” [...]. “Baptise her. Then she dies. What happens? [...] She’s been baptised. And she can’t have any sin on her soul. She’s too young. So what will happen? She’ll go straight to Heaven”” (GP 70). Thus, Miss Partridge concludes – with implicit reference to Grace – ““would it not be a good thing if the mother baptised the child and then killed her?”” (GP 70). If the mother was then executed for murder, then she would have demonstrated her love for the child by giving up her own life: ““Maybe the law will put her to death. Then she has laid down her life for her child.””; ““God would forgive a mother who laid down her life for her child to make sure her child entered into the life eternal because she had shown the love to do it, and greater love than this hath no man”” (GP 71). To murder Grace and be executed for that murder would be to attain a kinship with Grace – and God – by entering with her into the Kingdom of Heaven; what would appear as murder in this, corporeal world is, in terms of the higher world, a way of giving birth to Grace.

By good fortune, however, not only does the lethal communion of the poisoned sweet come to nothing, but Miss Partridge also has an opportunity to demonstrate a secular greater love. She has, without realising it, a potential kin-group. This is apparent in a conversation with Tommy in which she discusses the laundry:

“We’ve a lot of contracts for schools and hospitals and we’re growing. Do you know, I’m drawing over five hundred pounds every week in wages now? They’re well paid and they’re well looked after. They’ve got their own Welfare and they’ve even got a Social Club.”
 “You can’t beat these old family firms,” said Tommy. “I worked in an old family pub for years once. It made all the difference.” (GP 137)

The family-run business can work much like a kin-group by supplying internally related recognitive identities. Fortuitously, the wages-snatch gives Miss Partridge a chance to display greater love for her living fellows. She is like the soldier, sailor or miner who sacrifices himself for the rest of his organisation:

She hung on gamely and grimly for death or dear life. She wouldn't let go. It wasn't their money and it wasn't hers to give them. It was other folk's wages, girls who worked in sweat and steam, machine-minders, pressers and folders and parcellers, vanmen and vanboys, her own earned share and the manager's salary. She wouldn't, shouldn't, she couldn't let go. (GP 169)

Indeed, her loyalty to the bag is depicted as if it were the primary act of recognition:

'The wee woman was on guard at once, hugging her bag like a babe at her breast'

(GP 168). With this renewal of everyday kin relations, her eventual rescue is a secularised ascension:

With glazed eyes she saw them come, ministering angels all in white flying on wings of mercy to bear her up in their hands, blonde Sarah Finn bending over her blue-eyed and ramstam behind her Jean and Jess and all the other seraphim, hands reverently clasped at her suffering, praying for her, with others winging forward to raise her from her fallen state to be rewarded for ever in heaven for doing her duty even unto death. Last but not least, behind the angelic choir the Lord himself.

"Oh Mistralan" she moaned. (GP 171)

She has found a physical kin-group to divert her from her aspiration to kinship only with the divine. Mrs McKay recalls her testimony:

"it's a strange thing, she said, it was frightening too. I'd always thought I wanted to die but when it came to the pinch I found I didn't. I couldn't let go. [...] I used to think it would be a beautiful thing to die, just to lie back and not care any more and let go and fade away, but I

couldn't let go. I just hung on, she said, and it turned out it was the wages she was hanging on to." (GP 181)

Her maternal wishes find expression in her inability to release the wages bag, and so she is drawn back into kinship with the living – whose common life is symbolised by the wages as surely as if they were the ingredients for a sacramental meal.

It is perhaps less obvious that Percy, Mr Alfred, and Miss Partridge interpret co-incidence in the magico-religious manner discussed in the previous chapter. Percy is inclined to regard co-incidence as, potentially, the good-will of a higher power. He declares to the Brotherhood, with reference to the accidental discovery of the money:

'Yous has all been poor neglected boys all your life, without a good suit to your name or a good pair of shoes, but God has a special care for the poor and underprivileged, and sometimes He reveals Himself to them, like He done to the Jews. He chose the Jews and that's what He's did to you, He's chose you to get the good of this manna from heaven to help you in the desert' (BP 46).

Percy has entered a world where any apparent contingency can reveal a hidden intention. Even signs lose their arbitrary relation to their referents as 'a sheer coincidence gave substance to his vague dream' (BP 46):

he saw the word 'bethel' and stopped at it because it was the name of the street where he lived. The dictionary said that bethel meant a Methodist church and came from the Hebrew Beth-El, the House of God. [...] He knew that as a poet he must believe in the magic of words, and it came to him in a flash of inspiration that El wasn't only the God of the Hebrews, it was also in one of its forms the sign for the pound note. It was more than a coincidence to him. It had a meaning. It was a revelation [...]. The street called the House of God contained the cellar that contained the pound notes, and the pound notes were El and he was the prophet of El just as much as Moses was. He felt the burden of the elect upon him. (BP 46)

Words are not assigned by accident, but are rather allocated by the same design which supplies the money.

When Mr Alfred receives bad luck, he understands it as a fateful indication of the vanity of bodily existence. Rose is taken away from him by the unfortunate coincidence that Gerald's sister is Rose's best friend, with the consequence that Rose's 'casual confidence to Senga had a result neither of them expected' (MA 97). Mr Alfred is ready to acquiesce to this bad luck because he feels it bears a relation to his inner life of sexual fantasy:

while Mr Briggs was lecturing him he felt guilty enough of what he was charged with. There came into his mind the Gospel text that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. He didn't like that text. He thought it unfair. But he knew how he had often looked on Rose. (MA 107)

The contingency by which he loses Rose strikes to the centre of his materially contaminated psyche. His delusional, hallucinated encounter with Tod is merely the conclusion of his search for the intentionality which tortures him in his corporeal existence. It was Tod who saw how to strike at Mr Alfred through Rose:

'I know all about you,' said Tod. 'I know what you are all right. I know what you've been up to.'

Mr Alfred sagged with guilt. He waited to be accused of corrupting Rose. (MA 155)

All the violence and vandalism which Mr Alfred encounters can also be traced to Tod's organisation of the city's youth. There is no contingency in his experience of such anarchy, only the work of the "The Adversary"; as Tod says, "These things isn't accidental" (MA 158).

Miss Partridge also believes that good and bad fortune are assigned by a higher purpose. We should here examine Augustine's use of Christian theology to

reconcile the Aristotelian analysis of co-incidence with the magico-religious belief that such events are never truly accidental:

There are those who use the name 'destiny' to refer [...] to the connected series of causes which is responsible for anything that happens. We need not engage in a laborious controversy with them about the use of a word. For in fact they ascribe this orderly series, this chain of causes, to the will and power of the supreme God, who is believed, most rightly and truly, to know all things before they happen and who leaves nothing unordered. From him come all powers, but not all wills.²

In Augustine's analysis, necessitarian causal chains can be followed back to the initial conditions established by God in his certain foreknowledge of the freely-willed actions of each individual. The individual therefore bears a creative relation to his own fortune because God has already foreseen what each person will freely do, and has established co-incidences designed to assist that person in his salvation. Fortune and misfortune, Augustine tells us, encourage recognition of the vanity of earthly goods:

The most important question is this: What use is made of the things thought to be blessings, and of the things reputed evil? The good man is not exalted by this world's goods; nor is he overwhelmed by the world's ills. The bad man is punished by misfortune of this kind just because he is corrupted by good fortune.³

Even a good man may therefore suffer misfortune if he is yet to come to sincere repentance:

Though the sufferings are the same, the sufferers remain different. Virtue and vice are not the same, even if they undergo the same torment. The fire which makes gold shine makes chaff smoke; the same flail breaks up the straw, and clears the grain; and oil is not mistaken for lees

² Augustine, *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, trans. by Henry Bettenson (Harmondsworth(?)): Pelican, 1972; repr. London: Penguin, 1981), pp.188-89.

³ Augustine, pp.13-14.

because both are forced out by the same press. In the same way, the violence which assails good men to test them, to cleanse and purify them, effects in the wicked their condemnation, ruin, and annihilation.⁴

Augustine therefore draws on the example of Job, the story of whom can help explain ‘the infliction of temporal suffering on the good’⁵. Such misfortune occurs, the Bishop of Hippo tells us, so ‘that the spirit of man may be tested, that he may learn for himself what is the degree of disinterested devotion that he offers to God’⁶. This, he believes, is the function of the adversary’s persecution of Job. Satan enquires,

Doth Job fear God for nought?

Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.⁷

Does Job do good things merely in order to win secular privilege, or are his good actions the result of sincere repentance and humble obedience to the will of God? His sufferings will test the authenticity of his faith.

Miss Partridge, like Job, is deprived both of material goods and of family. As Tommy’s remark reveals, she loses three of her closest relatives within a few years: “‘You know, we’ve been awful unlucky you and me I often think. First Papa and Mama and then Auntie Kate, the only aunt we had’” (GP 135). This is, in the Augustinian interpretation, an opportunity to demonstrate that one’s virtuous conduct comes from an authentic sense of repentance, and not from merely utilitarian

⁴ Augustine, p.14.

⁵ Augustine, p.17.

⁶ Augustine, p.17.

⁷ *The Bible: Authorized King James Version*, ed. by Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), Job 1.9-11.

considerations. Miss Partridge remarks on Tommy's loss of his wife and child: "“To think you lost Ella and the baby too. It would make you believe there's a curse on our family. We've been made to pay for the happy childhood Papa and Mama gave us”" (GP 137). Miss Partridge's unalloyed enjoyment of her childhood led to a curse from God – she is being made to pay for her seduction by the world of physical pleasure. But, as we have seen, she also believes that she has been given the opportunity to have tested her repentant detachment from corporeal existence: "“God would forgive a mother who laid down her life for her child to make sure her child entered into the life eternal because she had shown the love to do it, and greater love than this hath no man”" (GP 71). It seems to be the will of God that she fortuitously encounters Grace on the landing, and has an opportunity to give her the poisoned sweet.

“Oh God! Oh God approves!” Miss Partridge exulted in a thought as swift as a lightning flash. “He has sent Grace to me in my hour of need.”
 “Oh, hullo Grace darling,” she smiled her smile of bliss, the certainty that she was among the elect flooding through her again. (GP 157)

God, Miss Partridge believes, would only arrange this co-incidence if He foresaw it as the occasion of her own and Grace's redemption.

Those who seek recognition from some higher power therefore interpret accidental causation as if it were part of some design emanating from a transcendent reality. It is, they believe, the means by which they can find a kinship denied to them in the everyday world of suffering and alienation.

Recognition and Self-Knowledge

This account of transcendental kinship must now be supplemented by a fuller analysis of the significance of recognition for Friel's work. Characters such as Mr Alfred, David Heylyn, and Helen, the protagonist of 'An Angel In His House', are unable to admit their true motivations into their socially-acknowledged identities. Friel, however, does not portray isolation from recognitive relations as a solution to such inauthenticity. Self-contemplation, for Friel, merely rehearses logically circular self-interpretations prejudiced by the ego-ideal to which one wishes to conform. He instead depicts an Hegelian process whereby unguarded interaction with intimate confidantes brings one to a more authentic self-conception. This kind of recognition by others is, for Friel, also related to transcendental kinship. A sense of community with a higher world may be both an insulation from, and a substitution for, such intimate recognitive relations.

The protagonist of *The Bank of Time* provides an extended portrayal of a character who is unable to reconcile his authentic being with conventional social roles. It seems to David that the constant conjunction of Mary and Carter demonstrates that they do, indeed, belong together: 'he saw them out together and he was pleased. Their association went on for nearly a year, longer than he had known any previous one last. His hopes of seeing his two friends married were high' (BT 70). His faith in their married wellbeing is supported by their adherence to an established pattern of recognitive roles: 'disposing of the future with the confidence possible only to a boy of sixteen who knows nothing of the world, he had Carter and Mary Ruthven courting, engaged, and married. The idea pleased him by its conventional

sentimentality' (BT 70). We see, however, that David's real self is concealed within this apparent conformity of his emotions with the typical expectations of his culture. The idea of Mary and Carters' marriage in fact pleases David because it satisfies legitimately his unacknowledged desire to be the father of her children:

He would have a house to visit, he would still be able to see her and listen to her, and Carter too would like to have him visit them. Then there would be children, and he could see them too and help them with their lessons and be a kind of uncle to them. (BT 70)

It is therefore unsurprising that David's habitual behaviour conceals a profound sexual admiration for Mary:

He himself called as a matter of routine, and she wouldn't let him go till she had given him a cup of tea. And over that cup of tea she chattered till he was past taking in what she was saying, but was aware only of the rise and fall of her pleasant fluent voice, of the fascinating way she emphasized certain words, [...] showed her teeth occasionally as she spoke, and used her fine hands to add a significance that lay beyond words. Even her throat and bosom, when she wore a low-necked dress, as she often did, held his attention more than her words. (BT 80)

Because of their age difference, however, David cannot conceive of his feelings for Mary:

'I've just been wondering,' Mrs Ruthven went on, 'when that girl of mine is going to get married. If ever. Do you know she's twenty-six this month?'

'Yes, she's four years older than me,' David answered thoughtlessly.

'Oh, that isn't much,' said Mrs Ruthven, polishing her spectacles as she sat with them on her lap, not looking at him, seeming just to think aloud. (BT 133)

David's reply to Paul reveals more of this difficulty in reconciling the reality of his emotions with the expectations of his culture:

'Your girl-friend could help us,' he said. 'Mary Ruthven.'

'Mary Ruthven isn't my girl-friend,' David said, rejecting the absurd phrase by the tone of his voice and the look on his face. He had just started work in the Inland Revenue offices, and the idea of him having a girl-friend was ridiculous. He was too conscious of his lack of pocket money and of the lopsided look of his face, with one eye dead and the other still alive. 'Why, she's five, well, four – at least three years older than me.' (BT 79)

David cannot find a place for his feelings within the conventional roles which surround him. He is, he believes, too young, too poor, and too ugly to love Mary.

This servility to pre-existing norms is apparent even in David's reaction to the name of Menzies' photographic company:

he disliked the name of the firm on the billheading. Nu-Art as a spelling of New Art seemed silly to him. He had never seen anything clever or amusing in such phonetic trade-names as Kumphy-Kots, Eezy-Kleen, Phit-U-Well, or Brite-Lite. He looked on them as a wanton and unnecessary attack on the conventions of English orthography. (BT 135-36)

This method of justification is threatened, however, when David attempts to explain to Paul his dislike of the photographs of naked women sent to him by Menzies:

He got himself involved in trying to explain his attitude to nude photographs. But since the nude was an accepted form of Western art he had to explain that he accepted the convention in painting while explaining away the fact that he didn't like it in photographs. (BT 137)

What David dislikes is not the photographic use of a painterly convention but, rather, the unexpected confrontation with his own sexuality: 'He put them back in the envelope. He felt a flush round his forehead, and he was annoyed to find he was blushing at all at the sight of half a dozen faked nudes' (BT 136). David, of course, is aroused by the photographs; but he misinterprets this arousal as embarrassment, and so misunderstands the object of his annoyance with himself. Typically, he chooses to interpret the prints as faked, rather than to falsify his own ascetic self-conception:

‘Why should people criticize me for being a puritan? I don’t criticize them for not being one.’

He took the photographs out of their envelope and looked at them again. He was quite sure they were bogus. The girls and women he saw in shops, buses, and offices, the females all around him in the teeming city, were never made like these nudes. No woman ever was. (BT 136)

The defensive hyperbole is telling; for there is at least one woman made like this – namely, Mary Ruthven.

As this example suggests, self-contemplation is insufficient to challenge David’s self-deception. This is again apparent when he is confronted with a glimpse of himself in conversation with Menzies in the pub:

‘Me? I haven’t got a dame,’ David answered, disliking the word and Menzies equally.

‘You’re in Mary Ruthven’s house every night in the week, aren’t you?’ said Menzies, fixing him with an insolent stare.

‘In Mrs Ruthven’s house,’ he answered pedantically. ‘It’s Mrs Ruthven I go to see.’ (BT 96)

David’s conclusion that he has no girlfriend is, he believes, securely founded upon the knowledge that he is otherwise engaged in visiting Mrs Ruthven every night. This alibi, we should note, is plausible only upon the assumption that he has no girlfriend and that, therefore, in visiting Mrs Ruthven, he sets no intrinsic value upon his consequent encounters with Mary. This logical circularity is also evident when David meditates upon his feelings for Mary after her return from London:

As for the idea of marrying her, he put it away as impossible. He was too used to being alone to put up with someone always with him.

Further meditation over a day or two convinced him he would be glad to marry her. He knew her so well, she would be easy to live with. (BT 172)

After Mary left Glasgow, he was habitually alone; but when Mary was in Glasgow, they were habitually together. Did he become alone because she was irreplaceable, or because his natural tendency was to loneliness? His habitual solitude is caught up in a circular justification: on one self-conception, it is proof of his love; on another, it is proof of his solitary character.

Such vicious circularity is most strikingly portrayed in the self-reflections of Mr Alfred. It is the means by which he is able to disguise his true feelings for Rose behind his role as a teacher. He cannot admit to himself that he is sexually attracted to this pubescent girl:

He would wait in his classroom. When she came to him he didn't touch her. He told the critic at the back of his mind he wasn't getting the girl to come to his empty room so that he could cuddle her. It was her simple presence, with no one watching, gave him pleasure. Just to be alone with her. That's what he thought. (MA 65)

If he were to touch her, it would be out of compassion, and not lust: 'He bent to listen. He forgot he had said he would never touch her. He was only trying to show sympathy. He put an arm round her shoulder as he inclined an ear. She moved in close, telling him' (MA 65). He understands such tenderness as a result of his concern for the girl's welfare: 'Emolliated with affection he stroked her hair from crown to nape, smoothed it back from her ear. Finger-tip on an auricle. So tender' (MA 67). Such concern extends, of course, to Rose's physiological well-being:

The sodden autumn drained into a freezing winter. She came back carrying the quotidian poke, her hands blue with cold.

He took one. He was upset to feel it so chilled on his errand. (MA 69)

If this action should no longer be due to its supposed original intention, this is only because human nature is controlled by causally necessitated habit:

After that he got into the habit of taking her hands when they were alone. He would pretend they looked cold and rub them. Then he stopped pretending. He held out his hand for hers while she was talking to him. (MA 70)

This too explains why an affectionate kiss can solidify into a ritual: 'Like all that had gone before the kissing too became a habit, with all the necessity of a habit' (MA 93).

Furthermore, Mr Alfred feels that he is the passive partner in the relationship:

It was she who had started their love-affairs by the way she chatted to him, by her rare trusting smiles. It was all her fault. How could he refuse to love her when she urged him to it? But he believed that what she urged him to was a father's love. She was no precocious miss just trying to provoke him. She spoke to him like a daughter, and his kisses were chaste, like a father's kisses. (MA 93)

Any bodily changes which may occur around Rose are merely indices of their emotional familiarity: 'It gave him a warm feeling of intimacy to mention bed to her, to think of her there' (MA 67). If his skin reddens – 'He felt the cheeks of her bottom pressed just above his kneecap. He was sure he was blushing.' (MA 91) – this is because of his gentle and shy character, and not because of any sexual arousal at her presence. Even an erection merely indicates his thankfulness for the warmth and friendship she has brought into his life:

When she went away he found he was tumescent. He argued with the man inside that it was only a desire to give her all the love he had. Not a stupid lust, but an erotic urge to an impossible act of gratitude. (MA 71)

He can further reassure himself that he is sexually uninterested – he is not, after all, a violent man: ‘He could imagine himself attacking Rose to feel her breasts and lift her skirt. He knew he never would. But he knew such things were done by men his age to girls her age’ (MA 69). His internal voice of criticism is, he persuades himself, too harsh in its interpretation of his actions:

An indecent assault on Rose was one of the sins he knew he could never commit. Yet he longed to kiss her goodnight, to see her into bed. He longed to say he loved her. But never to love her by force. It was the lack of affection in rape that shocked him. (MA 69)

Affectionate intercourse with Rose would, it is implied, be acceptable to Mr Alfred despite the lack of informed consent on her part; and who, after all, could be more affectionate towards Rose than Mr Alfred himself? What is extraordinary in these scenes is the extent to which Mr Alfred can nullify the potential of his actions and physiological responses to contradict his supposed identity. The potential counter-evidence is pre-interpreted in terms of his self-ideal and ends up in conformity with this self-conception: touching, stroking, flushing, hand-holding, kissing, and penile erection become tokens of a chaste, paternal admiration.

Friel’s symbolism, however, develops an alternative to such an account of self-knowledge. David’s circular self-reflections are literally reflective: ‘“It’s so difficult to make out just what one’s real emotions are,” he complained to the mirror, looking at his puzzled face as he was shaving’ (BT 173). We see something similar when Mr Alfred addresses his own mirror-image:

He was drunk that night. He always got drunk in the euphoria of starting a holiday from school. Recognising the face in the mirror of a public-house gents he made a face at it, questioned it.

'Well, wotta ya gotta say for yourself, eh?' he asked, swaying to the glass. 'Sennimennal old fool. Wanting to kiss Rose.'" (MA 71)

The self-criticism here is illusory: Mr Alfred is 'recognising' – attributing consciousness – to an illusion of another; this other then proceeds to interpret Mr Alfred as a sentimentalist, and not as a sexually frustrated old bachelor with paedophiliac leanings. The metaphor of the mirror therefore contains the seeds of Friel's response to the dead-end of self-contemplation. This alternative becomes clearer when we consider Mr Alfred's misinterpretation of 'self-reflection': "For the eye sees not itself," said Mr Alfred, "but by reflection. Excuse me. I'm too tired to reflect'" (MA 155). The Shakespearian original – from *Julius Caesar* – is actually as follows:

CASSIUS

Tell me, good Brutus, can you see your face?

BRUTUS

No, Cassius; for the eye sees not itself
But by reflection, by some other things.

CASSIUS

'Tis just;
And it is much lamented, Brutus,
That you have no such mirrors as will turn
Your hidden worthiness into your eyes,
That you might see your shadow.⁸

⁸ William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, ed. by Arthur Humphreys, The Oxford Shakespeare (Oxford: Oxford University, 1984), 1.2.51-58.

Self-reflection – in Cassius’s account – is not a solitary kind of thinking; it requires others to bring forth one’s concealed inclinations and capacities.

The short story ‘An Angel In His House’ continues Friel’s depiction of the role played by others in the formation of self-knowledge. It tells of a young woman, Helen, who is secretly at odds with the normative demand that she should preserve her virginity until she is established as a sexual being by the act of marriage. This conflict is evident in her choice of a sexually experienced young man with whom to pursue her ideal of pre-marital chastity:

He was tall, fair, in boisterous good health, fond of practical jokes, rather coarse, and altogether a knowledgeable young man.

So knowledgeable he alarmed her, and his brashness led her to put an end to their friendship. At least she tried to, but all she meant was that he should put an end to his extreme demands on her and continue more sedately. (FH 142-43)

They re-unite but, unsurprisingly, his sexual advances begin again; and so she decides that it is essential to her happiness that she escape the demands of her lover:

It became so bad again that she thought she would have to leave him for good, for her own good. But she was determined that this time he would not leave her under the pretext of failing to see the alternative she offered; she would do the leaving, without any alternative. (FH 144)

The alternative is, of course, marriage, and the socially legitimate sexuality to which she believes herself to aspire. Their dialogue, however, reveals to her how inauthentic her self-ideal is:

Only her astonishment kept her from weeping on the spot. She was almost hysterical at the calmness with which he announced he could not be calm in her company, at the complacency with which he took her impulsive suggestion that they should stop meeting. His

attitude illuminated for her the insincerity of her proposal, and that, too, was an additional pain. She had thought she was sincere when she medi[t]ated it, and she could not understand how it became any the less sincere simply because it found an unguarded expression. (FH 144-45)

With her lover, she is too intimate to put on the mask of her socially prescribed role; but she has not the courage to fully see the falsity of her self-ideal: 'She dimly saw that she didn't know what she wanted' (FH 145).

The consequences of her inauthenticity are unpleasant. She cannot admit to herself that her sexuality may have a recognitive value independent of its fulfilment in marriage. She therefore condemns herself to a guilty acquiescence:

She held out as long as she could, exercising an effort she felt in herself was terrific, but in one last moment, as he persisted, she loosened her grasp and she was beaten and no longer cared.

After it was all over, she wept for ten minutes, and privately wondered what she was fussing about. She was disappointed in herself, that she had done what she had sworn she would never do, and disappointed in what she had done, that it was hardly worth so much curiosity, so much fighting, so much excitement. (FH 147)

Their sexual intercourse is, to her, his action and her passion. Her disappointment is inevitable: she is not only guilty at her contradiction of her self-ideal, she is also unable to actively promote her own pleasure. Her self-deception is also bolstered by her relation with her work colleague, Mr Barlow:

He listened but said little. [...]. She could never have said if she even as much as liked him; he was beyond liking or disliking. But he had always kept her secrets, and the little he said made her feel friendly. He was like a wall that looks adequate, not a splendid piece of architecture, but the right height to lean on. (FH 148)

She continues, then, without admitting into her self-conception the knowledge of the intrinsic value to her of her own sexuality: by her inauthenticity, the sexual act appears to retain an essential relation to a married identity.

At this point we should recall Friel's doggerel summary of his literary and philosophical influences:

You can't bequeath that you have read
The Elizabethan dramatists,
The French and Russian novelists,
Kant and Hegel, Marx and Freud.⁹

Friel's treatment of self-knowledge is, broadly speaking, Hegelian. For the latter, self-consciousness is only achieved through intersubjective acknowledgement: 'Self-consciousness exists in itself and for itself, in that, and by the fact that it exists for another self-consciousness; that is to say, it *is* only by being acknowledged or "recognized"'.¹⁰ Robert R. Williams provides a useful account of Hegel's views:

unlike Husserl, Hegel [...] denies that the self is immediately present to itself in apodictic self-knowledge. It is well known that Hegel criticizes the claim that immediacy is the truth. This also applies to self-knowledge. Immediate self-consciousness conceals as well as reveals; immediate self-knowledge is in fact false consciousness.¹¹

This problematising of immediate self-consciousness leads to a philosophical transformation of the notion of 'recognition.' As Williams explains,

⁹ Iain Cameron, 'George Friel: an Introduction to his Life and Work' (unpublished MLitt thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1987), p.18.

¹⁰ G.W.F Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. by J.B. Baillie, rev 2nd edn (London and New York: George Allen & Unwin and Humanities Press, 1949), p.229.

¹¹ Robert R. Williams, *Recognition: Fichte and Hegel on the Other* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1992), pp.150-51.

Since the self is hidden from itself, it depends on the other for its own self-discovery. This is why self-knowledge for Hegel takes the form of *self-recognition in other*. For Hegel, intersubjectivity means that the self cannot be simply for itself, but needs and depends on the other in its own self-relation. The road to interiority passes through the other.¹²

The extension of the term 'recognition' is justified by two features of a proper account of self-knowledge: its relation to another, and its active character. Authentic self-knowledge, like achieving a certain social identity, is necessarily established through interaction between persons. As Williams puts it, 'Self-discovery or self-recognition in other is an essentially joint social action.'¹³

The Hegelian account posits a dialectic between the way I take myself to be, and the way I am recognised by others. When there is a clash between these two perspectives, there can and should arise a fruitful synthesis. Williams condenses Hegel's rather convoluted account:

The self must 'return' to itself out of its 'othered' state, by winning itself in the other's recognition. This return to self out of otherness is not simply a restoration of the original self-identity qua abstract immediate identity. Rather the original self-identity is enlarged and enriched by the other's recognition.¹⁴

This too is the presentation of intersubjectivity given by Hegel's early translator, the Scottish philosopher, J.B. Baillie:

Through the response of emotion the individual discovers his organic connection with other beings in a form which promotes or represses his sense of distinctive individuality. This organic union varies in extent and in degree conformably to the kind of beings with which he

¹² Williams, p.151.

¹³ Williams, p.157.

¹⁴ Williams, p.149.

is confronted, and the emotion varies accordingly. Some beings challenge the existence of his individuality, and these he meets with the emotion of resentment, dislike, fear, anger, hate, etc. Others increase or sustain his individual life, and towards these he experiences the emotions of sympathy, affection, love, etc.¹⁵

Recognitively acquired self-knowledge reveals one's inclinations and capacities – one's 'hidden worthiness', as Cassius might put it. A loving relationship brings one to pursue self-consciously and effectively a way of life which is individually fulfilling.

This recognitive account of self-knowledge suggests a way to resolve the difficulties of solitary self-reflection. David, for example, may consistently argue either that he does or does not love Mary. However, for most people their 'self-reflection' escapes such dilemmas by virtue of its recognitive nature. They are confident of the ethical fulfilment to be found by acknowledging the recognitive responses of their friends, family, and lovers. *The Bank of Time* therefore deals with a protagonist who loses both such intimate confidantes and the capacity to relate to them. David's self-isolation begins with Mark's flight during their childhood battle against Carter: 'He trembled with impotent rage and cursed his brother as much for his useless strategy as for his desertion' (BT 20). David is unable to disavow his childhood tribal ideal, and continues to harbour resentment towards Mark:

David was obstinate. He saw himself pledged to vindicate the family honour. Mark had simply abdicated after the battle of the stone. He had left school and gone to work, and he was too old to bother about these matters now. Paul was too pacific. So it was left to him. He was tired living on the fringe of events, there was no other way he could show Menzies the Heylyns were still important. (BT 27)

¹⁵ J.B. Baillie, *Studies in Human Nature* (London: G Bell and Sons, 1921), p.149.

The futility of this goal becomes apparent in David's subsequent encounter with Mary after the boxing match:

'Menzies?' she said softly.

The boy nodded mutely. He was past caring who it was. All he wanted was an end to the pain in his eye. The fame and glory he had set out to win seemed as insubstantial as smoke now they had eluded him, and his attempt to vindicate the honour of the Heylyns seemed a piece of unnecessary folly, a vanity that derided him. (BT 30)

Mary's pity illuminates for David the ethical vacuity of his fight with Stoorie. He does not, however, fully recognise his own suffering in Mary's response. This is initially apparent in his immediate lack of grief at his fate: 'He wanted to cry but his eyes seemed to need another relief than tears' (BT 29). This ambivalence endures even into his meetings with the eye doctor:

'Well, you know, you've been a very foolish little boy,' said the specialist on his last visit. 'Boxing is a fine sport. I've nothing against it. I used to do a little boxing myself when I was a student. But what you walked into wasn't boxing.'

'No,' said David, half admitting it and half questioning it. (BT 32)

Eventually, and very unwisely, David entirely refuses to recognise the vanity which lead him into the fight. His blinded eye provides a kind of individuality within the tribal world of childhood gangs:

the specialist's information left him proud of his suffering. It made him different, and that was what he wanted. He had lost the fight but he had won a name. He was the boy who had lost the sight of an eye in Menzies' boxing tournament. (FH 32)

What David loses in this identity is the willingness to open his self-conception to recognition by others. This is what he wishes unconsciously that the eye specialist could do for him:

He came to look on the specialist in the Eye Infirmary as an old friend and longed to speak to him at length, to listen to him, to learn about the infirmary and about eyes, about his own eye particularly, but all he was able to do was answer questions briefly and shyly. (BT 31-32)

The puns are obvious: in dialogue with a friend, one can learn about one's own 'I' particularly; in such a trusting relationship, one can acquire knowledge of one's own individual values. David, in losing his 'eye', also loses the ability to acquire knowledge of his own particular ego through recognition by another. He is therefore surprised by the mutual trust between Mrs Ruthven and her daughter:

He marvelled that anyone could be so frank, for he thought it was always wiser to say as little as possible and confide in nobody. To confide in a person put you in his power, and sooner or later what you confided would be thrown back at you, twisted and torn, to make a fool of you. So he believed. (BT 33)

This reaction to 'a relationship foreign to his experience and alien to his nature' (BT 33) is a corollary to his inability to overcome the vanity of the values which led him to fight Stoorie.

It is this continuing inauthenticity which contributes to Mark's departure. David continues to resent Mark's desertion during the battle of the stone as if, indeed, this childhood value still has anything to contribute to his happiness:

David brooded alone on the absence of justice in the disorderly world he lived in, and on the lack of law, and on the curse of fate that made him a whipping-boy for Mark. He had never

forgiven Mark for his desertion before the capture of the stone, and as they grew apart in adolescence he had little to say to him except when they were quarrelling. (BT 41-42)

David's resentment is expressed in his destruction of precisely the relationship he needs with Mark: 'David [...] took every opportunity to taunt Mark, to belittle him and sneer at his style and dress, his polite voice, and his meanness' (BT 42). This invalidation of Mark's values by David pushes the former away from recognitive self-knowledge, and towards the monadic self-reflection symbolised by the mirror:

He [David] watched him at the mirror one evening improving a wave in his hair, and he chanted softly.

'Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the prettiest of them all?'

Mark went on combing his hair and patting it.

'Mark Heylyn with the big feet and the wave in his hair,' said David. (BT 42)

Mark can now no longer trust his younger brother's responses to his actions: 'He was angry with David for his continual pin-pricking. What David derided as vanity about his appearance was to Mark only the most elementary self-respect' (BT 42).

Mark therefore mostly ignores Arbuthnot's advice to discuss what is best for him with those who are closest to him, and in whom he should have the most faith:

'It [leaving home] seems the wisest thing to do,' Mark answered. 'Don't you think so, sir?'

'Good Heavens, boy, that's not for me to say!' Mr Arbuthnot said, shocked at the request for his free opinion on such a private matter. 'I think you should speak to your father first, I think you should speak to your brothers. You mustn't do anything hastily, and you mustn't do anything underhand.'

'No, sir.' said Mark. (BT 52)

Mark is, of course, in great need of self-revelation. The life of travel which he eventually comes to love could have been made known to him by David:

Fiction and biography engrossed him. Their diversity of setting and character inspired him with a desire to improve his position, to move in a more exciting, more prosperous and more rewarding world. In rare intervals of peace between himself and David they shared their reading, and David, who had more leisure, brought from the library such stories of travel, adventure, and espionage as he was sure would please Mark. (BT 44)

Because of their hostility, though, it is precisely this knowledge of Mark which David is unable to continue to convey. Indeed, as a consequence of their growing estrangement, David further loses the ability to attain ethical self-knowledge:

he had allowed his teacher to persuade him to stay on a little longer and prepare for examinations to the junior grades of the civil service. He had no particular interest in the respectable plans his teachers sketched for his encouragement. (BT 42-43)

He finds no 'particular interest' – no individual value – in this course of life; he is content merely to assent to the values ascribed to him by those who know him least.

David's inability to engage in intimate dialogue has a harmful effect on more than simply Mark and himself. This is apparent when Mary Ruthven attempts to justify to David her belief that Alan is going to have sex with her so that he can divorce his wife and marry her:

'It can't go on,' she said. 'It's one row after another at home. [...] She made it quite clear. She has no use for a man in the house. She can live without a man, says she. And if he can't live without a woman he knows what he can do. She's not bothered.'

He tried to suggest she had only the married man's word for it all, he tried to hint that the evidence was incomplete and to that extent unsatisfactory, and anyway a married man shouldn't tell her such things. (BT 121)

Mary's belief that she and Alan are going to sleep together out of love is founded on the belief that he is going to divorce his wife in order to marry her. But the only proof

that he is going to divorce his wife is that he and Mary are going to sleep together. This circularity is apparent in David's summary of the situation: "And before you can marry him," he went over it doggedly, 'he'll have to get a divorce. And before he can get a divorce you'll have to provide the evidence'" (FH 122). David, however, fails in his role as a partner in unguarded dialogue:

He believed she was wading deeper into a sea of sorrow by determining to marry her married man, but he kept his thoughts to himself. He was afraid to say bluntly to her, 'The whole thing's absurd, and you're being utterly foolish.' (FH 123)

David's failure in this respect is crucial. Mary's confidence in her lover is misplaced. She is even prepared to give up her child in order to preserve the illusion that he is an exact and truthful mirror of her desires:

'True love has a queer ending. He said the only thing was not to have it. He seemed to think it was all my fault having it at all. I don't know what possessed me, but when I felt he didn't want the child neither did I. I suppose I was out of my mind.' (BT 167)

But the enormity of the sacrifice he demands shatters her vanity:

to do what he wanted me to do, not to have the child – that would have been wrong. I was ashamed of myself for even thinking of it. I had thought if he didn't want it neither did I. Then I saw it was as much mine as his, and nobody was going to stop me having it. That's when I left him. As far as I know his wife has gone to London and they're living together again. (BT 167)

As Mary recognises, it is possible to overextend faith in another, and look for love in one who will misrecognise your needs: "I suppose it depends on confidence," she answered. 'Confidence in God and man. Sometimes you find the confidence was misplaced. But it needn't be. And it's still something to have had the confidence'" (BT

168). Misplaced confidence leads to the self-destructive pursuit of a mistaken recognitively formed conception of one's happiness. We should be aware, therefore, of the ambiguity in Mary's words to David as she enters the maternity hospital: 'she turned back [...] and said in a voice so low he couldn't be sure he heard her right, 'You've been too kind to me'' (BT 175). Had David been rather more willing to cause Mary distress by criticising her self-conception, she could well have chosen another and better course of life. This, however, would also have meant coming to know the sexual love he felt for her, a love which is concealed even in the days before her death:

She held out her hand and they shook hands very briefly. It was the first time he had touched her hand. He was aware of that, but it was a purely mental awareness. He felt nothing particular in the touch. (BT 175)

It is perhaps David's final vanity to believe that he is emotionally capable of raising Mary's child: 'he had claimed her as his own, and he would have her out in due time. So he believed, speaking to himself, explaining it all and justifying his action, and suffering an irregular illusion that he was telling Mary Ruthven' (BT 177). David would like to believe he has this capacity with which to make amends for his failure to be a truthful friend to Mary. Indeed, as part of the process of adoption, he must pretend he was her lover: 'Once it had distressed him that Mary Ruthven wasn't married, but now he named himself on paper as the father of the child, though not the husband of the mother, and he wasn't at all embarrassed' (BT 177). David, however, has at least one friend he can trust – namely, Mrs Marchbanks. It was she who revealed to him his musical talents:

He heard a Mozart violin concerto, a Beethoven symphony, and a dance by Ravel. He didn't need to put on an act. Mrs Marchbanks saw by his face that he was excited and she was pleased with him. It was then he found he had an ear and a musical memory. (BT 118)

This cognitive self-revelation is something Mary does not provide:

Mary Ruthven called on him and caught him with a record of Schubert's ninth symphony on. She seemed surprised.

'I didn't know you were musical,' she said, looking vaguely about the room as if unable to understand where the music was coming from.

For the first time in his life he felt a spasm of impatience with her. (BT 120)

David therefore comes to have greater confidence in Mrs Marchbanks' discernment than in Mary's. He trusts her belief that he, and Mary's daughter, would be happier if the latter were adopted by Muriel:

He stopped in confusion, remembering he had never made any promise. One had been ascribed to him, and he had accepted it, that was all.

'Whatever promise you made to Mary Ruthven,' said Mrs Marchbanks softly, 'will be fully kept, better than you're keeping it now, if you let Muriel adopt her child.' (BT 201)

His trust in Mrs Marchbanks is repaid in the fulfilment he finds in refusing to accept what Mary ascribed to him: 'he saw then the full force of the arguments Muriel and her mother had used. They were right. The child was happier in the care of a woman than ever she had been with him' (BT 203). Finally, as he reflects on his relationship with Mary's daughter, he recognises the sexual love that he felt for her mother:

now she was no longer his responsibility, now she was gone from him, he knew he loved her, just as he knew he loved her mother when she too was gone from him. He had a spasm of longing that the child could have been his. (BT 208)

Recognition, in this extended sense, is also important even in those novels where Friel is more concerned with alienation from a recognised identity within a kin-group. Miss Partridge, for example, could perhaps have been prevented from attempting to harm Grace if her love had been allowed a secular manifestation:

the pointless love she could never tell anyone was with her sleeping and waking, longing to be told. After the turning point when her vague affection was clarified into an obsessive love just because Grace walked past her on the stairs, she tried once or twice to tell her brother Tommy, her only visitor. But he was so busy talking trivia nonstop in his eagerness to keep her spirits up he never let her get a word in edgeways. If she could have got him to listen, a confession of her love would have done her a lot more good than listening to him. (GP 52-53)

Tommy, on the other hand, feels unable to express freely his concerns to her:

he knew that if he ever did dare remind her of the danger she was in by getting too fond of the girl she would hate him for breaking the understanding that they were never to say she had once been put away. She might show him the door, banish him for ever in anger. He couldn't have that. He couldn't leave her to die alone. (GP 133)

He cannot bring himself to risk an attempt to make her recognise the potentially harmful nature of her interest in Grace. He understands, though, that his sister does require a confidante. He expresses his concern to Dross and his friends: "She lives too much in herself I think. Looks into herself all the time. You know what I mean. Sees nothing but herself like in a mirror" (GP 74). The symbolism of the mirror occurs again in order to indicate that Miss Partridge pursues the vanity of an entirely solitary self-knowledge. We find a similar observation being made with regard to Donald by Hugh Main:

“He’s not bad when you get to know him,” Main said to encourage her [Bobo]. “The fact you even talk to him is a big help. That’s what he needs, a girl to talk to, to take him out of himself. He’ll learn how daft his ideas are if you just keep talking to him.” (GP 75)

Both Donald and Miss Partridge need to be ‘taken out of themselves’ so that their endlessly self-confirming monologues can be disturbed by the responses of others.

Indeed, despite his superficial sociability, Mr Alfred is another of Friel’s protagonists who avoids intimacy with others. We find him thus in the pub:

he knew the man at his elbow and the man at his elbow knew him. They had seen each other often enough. But neither admitted knowing the other’s name, though he must have heard it countless times from Stella, who knew them all. (MA 5)

By mingling with a number of people none of whom he knows individually, he avoids being recognised in his own particularity: ‘In every pub he went to he recognised anonymous faces’ (MA 5). It is precisely this longing for anonymity which Granny Lyons attempts to draw to his attention:

‘I suppose it will be a lot of low dives tonight, in that coat,’ she said.

‘I suppose so. I like to mix with the common people sometimes. You know, go around incognito.’ (MA 15)

She realises that he wishes to escape the judgement of others on the emptiness and unhappiness of his alcoholic loneliness: ‘You think your boys won’t recognise you?’ she asked him. ‘Sure they’d know you a mile away’ (MA 14). Granny Lyons is, however, too placid to quarrel with Mr Alfred in order to challenge his self-conception.

Thus, with the aid of alcohol, Mr Alfred can continue to conceal from himself the failed path of his life – until, that is, Gerald Provan provides the occasion to recognise his own unhappiness:

Mr Brown brought in a copy next morning in case Mr Alfred had missed it.

'You look a right badtempered old bastard there,' he said.

Mr Alfred hadn't seen his picture. He seldom bought an evening paper. He was shocked. He had the same irrational disbelief as some people have when they hear their voice on tape for the first time. That wasn't him. (MA 41-42)

He begins to recognise the nullity of the values which he has taken to be good for himself, and to accept as correct the misery that others acknowledge in him:

Mr Alfred drank more than usual that night. He went on a pub-crawl in what Granny Lyons called his disguise, but he was sure everybody recognised him. He couldn't forget how his face looked in the paper. And that would be how it looked to other people he supposed. Yet he knew he had once been tall, dark and handsome, with a profile and a moustache that made his fellow students say he looked like Robert Louis Stevenson. (MA 42)

Yet, as this comparison to Stevenson suggests, he cannot overcome his orientation to the world of letters:

He had long forgiven the uninterested publishers. Maybe they were right not to want his poems. After all, they were the only arbiters he respected. The praise of a friend, if friend he ever had, would prove nothing. And now he didn't know what to do. He was too old to earn a living anywhere else. (MA 59)

Recognition in its extended sense is therefore relevant even to those of Friel's protagonists who are orientated towards a transcendental kinship. Their isolation from kinship networks removes them from the recognitive relations which might reveal their alienated misery.

Transcendental kinship, however, need not merely provide insulation from everyday intimacy. It can also supply a delusory affirmation of one's self-conception. The worship of El, for example, does more than simply position Percy within a religious fraternity:

He went to the public library every night and brought home books on philosophy, psychology, economics, and the history of art from the cave-paintings to Picasso. He found his pleasure in the very act of borrowing them. When the girl stamped the date-label and filed the title-slips with his tickets he was sure she admired and respected him. Nobody else in his unjust position would have had the courage and intelligence to borrow such books. (BP 8-9)

The girl is, as it were, a mirror, who reflects back to Percy the courage and intelligence which he believes is his, and which is, supposedly, vindicated by his possession of these objects. The books are props with which to beguile others into a specious affirmation of his self-conception: 'To see Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* on the kitchen dresser alongside the first volume of Marx's *Capital* was a great consolation to him. You never knew who might come in and see them' (BP 9). Even being in a certain part of town provides a scenery for his now imagined audience:

When he crossed the Arts Quadrangle and approached the Bute Hall he felt happier and lighter. [...] He was where he ought to be. If the girl in the library could see him now she would think he was a student all right. (BP 14)

In this private drama, his name becomes a justification of his supposed authenticity as a poet: 'He stopped hating his name. He became proud of it. It made him something of a poet too. He read up on Shelley' (BP 18). Perhaps most fatally of all, he comes to regard his closest relative as someone miscast in her supporting role:

How could he, so tall and handsome, come from such a shrivelled thing as this crabbit woman with grey hair, mournful eyes, a flat chest and skinny legs with black cotton stockings? It was another injustice. He should have had a beautiful elegant mother with shapely legs and a bosom like the advert for a shaving soap, not too much and not too little, a mother who would inspire him to write the poetry he knew he could write if only he could get peace and quiet. (BP 11)

He will have no regard for her attempts to puncture his vain belief that he is living authentically:

[Percy:] "You've never lived. I've lived, so I have. I've read the great poets, it's more than you ever done. You, you've no idea of culture."

"Have you?" she asked him very coolly, cutting him deep. "You couldn't even pass your qually and you try and kid me about culture. You never read the half of the books you bring in here."

"Ach!" he snarled at her. (BP 12-13)

We must, therefore, approach with suspicion Percy's attraction to a life free from alienated and unfulfilling labour: 'He wanted to be free from the need to earn his living so that he could be a poet like Shelley or make documentary films like Peter Scott or be a novelist like Tolstoy or even a television personality' (BP 15). The role of money in this future life reveals the inauthenticity of his aspirations: 'All you needed was money. Anything was possible if you had the money to give you the leisure to do it' (BP 15). El's bounty merely increases the possibility of securing specious acknowledgement of his vanities. The location of the money is significant: it is found in 'six tea-chests, three along and two deep, containing the costumes and small props used in the annual School Concert' (BP 24). Percy therefore initially uses his new-found leisure to spend more time around the freely available props and scenery: 'He gave up his job without telling his mother and spent his days at the

Mitchell Library pursuing an elusive something he thought of as his studies' (BP 54-55). He also finds for himself an audience whom he can deceive into confirming his belief in his literary talents:

It was a great pleasure to him to sit amongst the undergraduates and look at the legs of the girls from Queen Margaret College when they sat across from him with their knees crossed. It made him feel he was a student too. (BP 55)

The money is also used to acquire new props with which to misrecognise himself; for example:

He bought a fishing-rod and basket, and boots and waders and a jacket and hat to match, though he knew nothing about fishing and didn't know where to go fishing anyway. But he had read that fishing was a solitary and peaceful sport, fit for thoughtful men, and he hoped he would find time to be solitary and peaceful some day. (BP 59)

Percy is set on a path of consumerist excess in which prop after prop is thrown into the abyss of his self-conceit – as if, indeed, lies to himself could, by their sheer number, convert into truth.

His relationship with Sophy is also little more than an attempt to beguile another into misrecognising him. Her kiss he takes as an action which implicitly confirms his poetic talent:

[Percy:] "What is all this kissing worth
If you don't kiss me?"

"That's nice, I like that," she breathed, and they kissed. He wasn't very good at it and she felt he needed practice.

"That's Shelley, that is," he broke off. (BP 135)

We should note, therefore, the pun implicit in Sophy's name:

"Oh, Sophy, please," he groaned, an asthmatic bull in a grassless meadow. "I think you're wonderful. I love you. I want you."

She didn't even pretend to be impressed. She sent a little signal of scepticism through her nose, a maidenly snort of disbelief. (BP 137)

A genuine love for Sophy would cause Percy to acquire the wisdom implicit in her name, and realise the vanity of his belief that he is a poet.

Even when Percy disavows his poetic aspirations, this is also because of his relation to El. Frank Garson is given the confidence to betray the Brotherhood when his parents re-unite. This only comes about because his mother happens to read, in a quite improbable fashion, an advert he has put in the paper, and it is by this coincidence that Frank comes to inform on Percy, and thereby ensure his arrest. Percy, however, with his belief in destiny, must interpret his arrest as something more than just bad luck. It is, he concludes, designed to bring him to a frank confession of the error of his ways: "Mind you, I see the fallacy," he said. He liked the word. It was an honest admission of error. 'I like to give in to a fair thing' (BP 217). Fate has brought him to recognition of his authentic selfhood. His ambitions were mere pretensions; in truth, they were not elements of his genuine, inherited, personality:

"I'm not a poet, I'm not a philosopher. You've got to be born to these things. It's all a matter of hereditary. There's no use kidding and swanking. My father was only a plumber and then he was a janitor and my mother worked in Templeton's carpet factory [...]. I'd need a different hereditary, but then I wouldn't be me, would I?" (BP 218)

The various co-incidences in the novel seemingly bring Percy to a recognition of his genetically inherited inner being, and thus to an understanding of the inauthenticity of his hope to be something other than 'a packer in the Co-op' (BP 58).

But how convincing is Percy's assertion that he has not been born to anything better? His account of his inherited background entirely overlooks its formation by contingency. He forgets to include his uncle Sammy, who was, in fact, his father's twin. The 'stranger', while attempting to track down the loot, gives a rather different account of the intelligence and cunning of the Phinns: "We miss Sammy [...]. He took a year rehearsing the Finnieston job, his first real big job. He had a great future, so he had, the same man. Then he had to go and get killed" (BP 150). It is by a simple accident that Percy is not the nephew of a daring and successful bank robber: his uncle Sammy, Mrs Phinn informs us, was "killed in that smash on the Edinburgh Road" (BP 154). Percy's appeal to heredity as the source of his character is just another mythical way of assigning a transcendental meaning to co-incidence; the wheel of fortune raises him up only to cast him down in order to drive home this lesson in genetics.

This, then, is the sense in which Percy seeks recognition from El. His supposed relation to El substitutes for the confirmation, or disconfirmation, of one's self-conception normally provided by loved ones, family and friends. Transcendental kinship, then, can also function as a putative replacement for the recognitive relations which are so vital to Friel's depiction of authenticity. Instead of taking part in unguarded dialogue with loved ones, the worshipper deciphers the secret communications transmitted to him by the providence of his deity.

Conclusion

Friel's novels elaborate the motifs of kinship and religion found in the short stories. He depicts a process whereby those who are alienated from earthly kin relations seek out recognitive identities with, or through, some transcendental power. Matters are further complicated by the fact that, for Friel, dialogue and interaction are essential to the unpredictable process by which one may move towards a more authentic sense of one's self. Transcendental kinship may also, then, substitute for earthly recognition in a further sense: it may stand in for the everyday intersubjective acknowledgement which promotes authentic being.

THREE

TRANSCENDENTAL KINSHIP AND RECOGNITION IN THE NOVELS
OF ALASDAIR GRAY

Introduction

My analysis of Alasdair Gray's work will be restricted to three novels: *Lanark*, 1982 *Janine*, and *The Fall of Kelvin Walker*. I will also make reference to Gray's collection of poetry, *Old Negatives*. This chapter demonstrates that, in Gray's work, the absence of recognition – in its extended, epistemic sense – is also a cause of transcendental kinship. I show in detail how there arise pathological consequences from this adaptation to an absence of trusted others. I conclude by analysing Gray's depiction of recovery from transcendental kinship and its associated pathologies.

We saw in Friel's novels how recognitive alienation led the protagonists to be orientated towards kinship with, or through, a transcendent reality. We also encountered another sense of recognition in which what was achieved through social interaction was not a certain identity but, rather, authentic self-knowledge. This latter kind of recognition is threatened in Gray's novels by the Calvinist culture of Scottish masculinity. To be acknowledged as a man, a Scottish male must assent to the sinfulness of his spontaneous inclinations which is supposedly reflected by the punitive responses of the Scottish men who rear him. This abusive recognition echoes the

relationship between the Judaeo-Christian God and His worshippers: they must assent to their original sin if He is to acknowledge them as part of His community. We find then, in Gray's fiction, that the Scottish man – a type instantiated by Duncan Thaw, Kelvin Walker and Jock McLeish – inhabits a world which is only superficially demythicised. In truth, he believes that providential torment – a transcendental alienation – awaits him if he should cultivate his spontaneous being. Duncan Thaw attempts to escape this cultural and economic demand that he should surrender his authenticity in order to be a member of the surrounding community. Thaw's response, however, does not overcome transcendental kinship: rather, he establishes and maintains a fantastic relationship with a personal deity who shields him from the Calvinist guilt which would otherwise attach to his artistic and literary interests. This response, however, has great disadvantages. Any misfortune seems to indicate a broken relationship with his deity. It is the consequent pattern of breach and renewal which perverts Duncan's sex life into a search for transcendental kinship through erotic communion. His retreat into fantasy also removes him further from the everyday recognitive relations which might bring to light yet more aspects of his own character. It is this latter process which is fantastically represented in the bodily metaphors which afflict Lanark in the Third Book. Furthermore, it is precisely Thaw's lack of recognitively-acquired emotional consciousness which engenders the psychosomatic asthma that takes such a prominent place in his personal theodicy. The model of healthy recognitive relations to which Gray subscribes is not, however, readily apparent in *Lanark*. We must turn instead to *1982 Janine* and to Jock McLeish's eventual, recognitively effected escape from the attribution of original sin to his spontaneous inclinations.

Two theoretical excursuses are interpolated into my textual interpretation. Firstly, I will draw upon Gray's explicit reference to Hume's phenomenology. This enables me to develop – by reference to Malinowski – Gray's motif of an inversion of the normal distinction between vivid impressions and faint ideas. This phenomenological reversal leads me to Piaget's account of ontogenetically primitive thinking. I employ Piaget's analysis as a hermeneutic aid to the detection of Thaw's childhood animism.

Secondly, I will make frequent reference to the work of R.D. Laing on the mental illnesses which accompany the distortion of recognitive relations. Gray eventually met his fellow Glaswegian when the latter was on a lecture tour in 1985. As John Clay, Laing's biographer reveals, Gray was already under Laing's influence:

From Edinburgh[,] Laing went to Glasgow to promote *Wisdom, Madness and Folly*, and met the Glaswegian writer Alasdair Gray. Gray attended his lecture at Gartnavel Hospital, Laing's old stamping ground. Gray had been an admirer of Laing's books since they first came out in the 1960s. 'I found them stimulating because agreeable. When one writer finds a second agreeable it is most certainly because number one has translated number two into number one's terms.'¹

I will therefore be concerned throughout this chapter to translate Gray back into Laing's terminology. Laing's theory provides a model for the hypnotic process by which, in Gray's work, Scotsmen are convinced of their original sin. Laing's analysis of the pathologies consequent upon such an ascription is also strikingly close to the metaphorical diseases which afflict the inhabitants of Unthank. Indeed, his insistence on the relevance of recognition to mental illness also allows me to support Gray's

¹ John Clay, *R.D. Laing: A Divided Self: A Biography* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1996), p.228.

presentation of Thaw's psychosomatic asthma as a result of his insulation from
recognitive relations.

The Original Sin of Authenticity

In this first section, I will demonstrate that, for Gray, Scottish manhood is attained only by an economically efficient renunciation of an authentic relation to self. This renunciation is based on an assent to the original sin which Scotsmen claim to recognise in the spontaneous inclinations of Scottish boys. To dissent from this stifling ascription is, within the Calvinism of Scottish culture, to renounce one's transcendental kinship with the Judaeo-Christian God.

Let us begin with Gray's depiction of what a boy must undergo to be recognised, in Scotland, as a man. Jock McLeish wonders if Hislop may have been his biological father. Jock has little evidence for this apart from his pre-marital conception and a comment made by an old man concerning 'my resemblance to Hislop the English teacher, a resemblance which I never heard anyone else refer to' (J 83). Jock's suspicion may be quite inaccurate, biologically speaking, but, in a recognitive sense, it is quite exact: it is Jock's relation to Hislop which allows him to be born into the community of Scottish masculinity. For Hislop, ritualised punishment is a rite-of-passage by which a boy comes to be acknowledged as a man: 'He went soft. He smiled and nodded, slipping the Lochgelly over his shoulder under the jacket. He said gently, "Go to your seat son. There's a spark of manhood in you"' (J 85). This recognitive function of ritual humiliation in the classroom is clarified by Jock's scriptural allusion: "'The Lord Chastiseth whom he loveth,'" says the bloody old Bible' (J 86); or, as Paul's epistle expresses it, 'For whom the Lord loveth he

chasteneth, and scourgeth every son he receiveth'.² For Paul, those who accept God's punishment come to be acknowledged as members of God's kin; they are the legitimate children of God:

If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?
But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.³

Thus, to be counted a Christian, or to be recognised as a Scottish man, one must accept the beatings administered by one's God, or by one's teacher.

The initiation rite of the tawse takes on an especially sinister colour because to be beaten is to receive the angry response which complements evil or threatening intentions. Thus, those boys who are beaten so arbitrarily by Hislop also acquire a mysterious guilt: 'I did not tell my mother that he had belted me because I believed that getting hurt that way was a shameful thing' (J 82). The theological parallel, then, extends further: the pupils who attain 'manhood' are also inculcated with a sense of original sin – as the adult Jock remarks, 'There is evil in me, which is why I deserve whatever I get' (J 60). Such themes are dealt with in the Book of Job. Job is convinced initially of his own righteousness, and of the injustice of his condition:

till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me.
My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach *me* so long as I live.⁴

² *The Bible: Authorized King James Version*, ed. by Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), Heb 12.6.

³ *The Bible*, Heb 12.7-8.

⁴ *The Bible*, Job 27.5-6.

But when confronted with the awful majesty of the Lord himself, he recognises his own iniquity:

the LORD answered Job, and said,
Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct *him*? He that reproveth God, let him answer it.
 Then Job answered the LORD, and said,
 Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.⁵

Who would dare disannul the judgement of the Lord – or of Mad Hislop?

In order to begin to understand properly the power of such unfounded attribution, we should recall the relationship in *The Bank Of Time* between Mary Ruthven and Alan, her married lover. Mary's misplaced confidence in Alan leads her to accept his ascription to her of a wish to abort her pregnancy. She tells David, "I don't know what possessed me, but when I felt he didn't want the child neither did I. I suppose I was out of my mind" (BT 167). Alan exploits Mary's human vulnerability to cognitive responses by abusing her trust in him, and attributing to her a feeling she does not possess. Gray depicts a similar interaction between Kelvin Walker and Jill:

"But I don't love you, Kelvin!"
 Kelvin stepped quickly over and knelt before her, staring into her eyes. He said, "How can you be sure of that? No, you can't be sure! You're not sure. How can you feel you don't love me when every bit of me is intent on you, intended for you?" (K 82)

⁵ *The Bible*, Job 40.1-4.

He casts his ardour as a response to her love, and asks that she recognise herself in the mirror he claims to be:

“How can you be certain you don’t love me? Certainty isn’t easy in a world as big and as strange as this one. Listen, I want to leave you and I can’t and it’s your fault. If you didn’t keep me here I would walk out at once, but you keep me here because you need me. You know you keep me here!” (K 82)

Jill, however, is able – for a while – to resist Kelvin’s attempt to ascribe such feelings to her:

Jill shook her head in a lost frightened way. He said softly, “Yes, you do it. You know you do it. Why do you do it?”
 “I ... I’m not sure ...” Then she awoke and jumped up saying, “For Christ’s sake, Kelvin, come off it!” (K 83).

She can understand that Kelvin’s actions are not a response to her own desires: “It’s no use, Kelvin. You’re here because you want to be here. You can’t hypnotise me into believing anything else” (K 83). Both Friel and Gray therefore present a way in which recognition may be abused. The dependence of self-discovery upon the other may be exploited in order to enforce the unwarranted attribution of emotions and desires. Such misattribution is abetted by the presence of a relation of kinship – to shrug off the ascribed feeling could potentially lead to ostracism from one’s community.

This leads us to our first reference to the work of R.D. Laing. He describes a similar phenomenon by which, for example, an original, unwarranted guilt can be attributed to a child:

One way to get someone to *do* what one wants, is to give an order. To get someone to *be* what one wants him to be [...] is another matter. In a hypnotic (or similar) context, one does not tell him what *to be*, but tells him what he is. Such *attributions*, in context, are many times more powerful than orders (or other forms of coercion or persuasion). An instruction need not be defined as an instruction. It is my impression that we receive most of our earliest and most lasting instruction in the form of attributions. We are told such and such is the case. One is, say, told one *is* a good or a bad boy or girl, not only instructed *to be* a good or bad boy or girl.⁶

Laing, like Gray, regards this process as analogous to hypnotism:

When attributions have the function of instructions or injunctions, this function may be denied, giving rise to one type of *mystification*, akin to, or identical with, hypnotic suggestion. Hypnosis may be an experimental model of a naturally occurring phenomenon in many families.⁷

Laing therefore wonders how much of what we believe ourselves to feel is, in fact, merely the result of assent to quite unfounded cognitive responses:

How much of what we ordinarily feel, is what we have all been hypnotized to feel? How much of who we are, is what we have been hypnotized to be?

Your word is my command. A relationship of one to another may be of such power that you become what I take you to be, at my glance, at my touch, at my cough.⁸

Indeed, he concludes, much of adult life may be lived under the influence of an original misattribution:

I consider many adults (including myself) are or have been, more or less, in a hypnotic trance, induced in early infancy: we remain in this state until – when we dead awaken, as Ibsen makes one of his characters say – we shall find that we have never lived.

⁶ R.D. Laing, 'The Politics of the Family' in R.D. Laing, *The Politics of the Family and Other Essays* (London: Tavistock, 1971), pp.65-124 (p.78).

⁷ Laing, 'Politics of the Family', pp.78-79.

⁸ Laing, 'Politics of the Family', p.79.

Attempts to wake before our time are often punished, especially by those who love us most. Because they, bless them, are asleep.⁹

It seems quite probable, then, that Gray borrowed the conceptual model of hypnotic attribution from Laing.

Let us leave Laing for the present, however, and return to Gray. For Gray, the hypnotic ascription of original sin takes place within a culture which is only superficially enlightened. Despite his apparent rationality, the typical Scottish man lives in fear of the providential punishment which awaits those who – like Job – proclaim their own unconditional worth and alienate themselves from God's community. It is this belief which leads Jock McLeish to meditate thus on the unexpected success of *McGrotty and Ludmilla*:

I was sure we were all becoming too lucky too fast. I felt as my mother possibly felt one morning when the postman, delivering a parcel, told her it was going to be a fine warm summer day. She said grimly, "We'll pay for it." (J 253)

It is not long, therefore, before Jock detects – in the show's apparent failure – the punishment inevitably due to one who expects to be rewarded with happiness and fulfilment:

"the show has now no chance at all. Hanging on here is a waste of time, energy and money. The police are going to keep those books for at least another couple of days, so even if the club does manage to open again, and even if Helen and Brian do come back to us, we will only have one other performance, a performance in which the cast will again outnumber the audience. Let's not descend to that." (J 285)

⁹ Laing, 'Politics of the Family', p.82.

Jock finds further confirmation for his interpretation of events in his encounter with Helen's father. Mr Hume, like Hislop before him, becomes a medium by which Judaeo-Christian motifs persist into an apparently atheistic culture: 'as Mr Hume stonily raved and thundered like Moses on Mount Sinai he was talking about Denny, although he did not know it' (J 299). His diatribe preys on the sense of original sin taught to Jock by Hislop: 'I must have already suspected I was shit for Mr Hume's words completely crushed me. I saw that I was a dirty bit of stupid wickedness and it was right that three men were flexing their muscles to punch me' (J 299).

The spiritual sanction is also the same as that threatened by Hislop: one is alienated from the community of Scottish men if one refuses one's punishment. Jock therefore draws a comparison with William McIlvanney's *Docherty* – 'a novel which gave an impression of curt masculine authority by having a single surname for the title' (J 298). Docherty makes a similar speech to the effect that 'if an ordinary man illtreats and abandons the woman who has trusted him he is openly announcing his isolation from the human race' (J 299); and thus, in Jock's description, Docherty 'becomes that horriddest of commonplaces, a Scotsman pretending to be God' (J 299). Therefore, though Jock knows he does not love Helen, he sees her supposed pregnancy as the proverbial 'accident' sent providentially to punish him for betraying Denny. Accordingly, he accepts his destined punishment, and expresses an inauthentic desire to marry Helen: 'I said softly, "Please inform your daughter that I love her dearly and will marry her whenever she feels it best that I do so"' (J 300). Jock therefore acquiesces in a loss of personal authenticity:

He [Mr Hume] stopped in front of me and said, "You're a cold fish."

I shrugged. I felt that what I was no longer greatly interested me. (J 300)

Jock feels his fate is finally sealed when a dreadful accident afflicts his life:

I read the words GLASGOW TECH STUDENT PLUNGES TO DOOM. One of Glasgow's ornate Victorian buildings near the city centre was awaiting demolition. Alan's fractured body was found shortly after dawn in a lane at the foot of the back wall. (J 303)

We have here another variation on the motif of punishment for sin: 'doom', in its original sense, means 'judgement' or 'condemnation'¹⁰; thus, to die in a fall is merely to illustrate what happens to those Scottish men who desire fulfilment and joy. We should also recall here a remark Jock makes about his own father: 'like most parents he did not want his child to openly display pride and happiness, because these states make other people envious, and often go before a fall' (J 199-200). The theodical relation between being proud of oneself, and undergoing a fall, needs little elaboration: Alan's death is, to Jock, one more instance of what is due to those Scottish men who forget their original sin and proudly renounce their transcendental kinship with the Judaeo-Christian God.

This pervasive culture of inauthenticity possesses, however, an additional, economic significance. When Jock is taken by his parents to buy clothes for his college life, he is told by his father that 'what an employer values in a man – what a man values in his workmates – what a man values in himself – is consistency' (J 202). It is a shock when Jock displays an unforeseen inclination:

¹⁰ *Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary*, ed. by A.M. Macdonald, new edn (Edinburgh: Chambers, 1972), p.386.

The salesman displayed ties of silk and cotton and wool in a great many patterns and colours. My mother fingered them, held them up and laid several aside before it occurred to her to ask, "Have you any idea of what *you* would like, Jock?"

I pointed to a rack of bow ties and said, "I would like those."

Mum and Dad stared hard at me and then at each other. They were alarmed. (J 202)

Above all, men are dependable and reliable; to be spontaneous or different is to lapse from recognised Scottish manhood. Thus, after marrying Helen, Jock's business is with 'National Security Ltd.' (J 306); his job is 'to secure a place against acts of God, and human carelessness and criminal intent' (J 307), and for this he 'must know the work schedules, work routines (which differ from schedules) and work habits (which are outside schedules and routines and can contradict them)' (J 307). Jock is paid to make employees into reliable organs of their company, and in the process, he too becomes entirely predictable:

I am now exactly the man she [Jock's mother] wanted me to be – heavily insured with a company car when I require one, expense account, index-linked pension and no connection at all [sic] with the real women she would have despised: Helen, and Sontag, and the editor, and the whore under the bridge, and my first of all girlfriends oh, forget *her*. I have total security at last, security until death. (J 28)

The treacherous ascription of original sin in the classroom and in the home is, then, typical of the complicity between economic efficiency and ascetic Protestantism which we saw in the work of George Friel. Without a sense of his own autonomous values, the typical Scottish man is more easily moulded into the form demanded by the socio-economic system. It is precisely this self-instrumentalisation which we also find in *Lanark*'s Robert Coulter. His engineering job is a rite-of-passage to manhood: "It was different from school, and you were getting paid, and you felt a *man*" (L 215). But his manhood is acquiescence in the failure of his own life:

“Well, anyway, this business of being a *man* keeps you happy for mibby a week, then on your second Monday it hits you. To be honest the thought’s been growing on you all through Sunday, but it really hits you on Monday: I’ve to go on doing this, getting up at this hour, sitting in this tram in these overalls dragging on this fag, clocking on in this queue at the gate.” (L 215)

Coulter has become a reliable and predictable human component: “Mind you, this feeling doesnae last. You stop thinking. Life becomes a habit. [...] Life’s easy when you’re a robot” (L 216).

Gray therefore portrays the Calvinist attribution of original sin as a way in which the unpredictable orientations of authentic human beings may be homogenised for the sake of economic efficiency. Instead of living authentically, the Scottish male is ethically guided by the supply of a certain way-of-life to the demands of the market. The mythic worldview of ascetic Protestantism, in Gray’s depiction, persists latently in modern Scottish society precisely because of this symbiosis between irrationality and productive efficiency.

The Worship of the Moon-Goddess

We shall now see how Duncan Thaw attempts to overcome the guilt he would normally feel, as a Scottish man, over his spontaneous inclinations. As the result of a childhood adventure during an air-raid, he acquires a personal religion directed towards a deity whom he conceives of as a Diana- or Artemis-like figure. As Thaw matures, this personal religion intensifies and deepens in order to protect his artistic and literary inclinations from the Calvinist guilt which would otherwise attach to them. Accordingly, his sexual life is perverted into an attempt to find communion with the avatar of the moon-goddess. I synthesise a variety of secondary sources in order to argue that Thaw's spontaneous religion is a more realistic depiction than it might at first seem. This parallel argument also provides a useful hermeneutic guide to textual evidence for Thaw's superstition which might otherwise be overlooked.

Let us begin with the hypnotic power of attribution which we have seen exercised by Kelvin Walker and exercised upon Jock McLeish. We find Duncan Thaw succumbing to his father's power of suggestion:

He drew a giant with a captured princess running along the brown line, and since he couldn't draw the princess lovely enough he showed the giant holding a sack. The princess was in the sack. His father looked over his shoulder and said, "What's that you're drawing?" Thaw said uneasily, "A miller running to the mill with a bag of corn." (L 121)

Thaw is being taught to interpret his interest in telling stories, and drawing pictures for them, as some kind of exercise in technical illustration. Mr Thaw employs the kind of wilfully mistaken attribution described by Laing: 'Mr. Thaw got a golf ball and a table lamp and explained that the earth was like the ball and the sun like the lamp.

Thaw was bored and puzzled' (L 121). Mr Thaw, by acting as if Duncan's drawing were an inquiry into celestial mechanics, smothers his son's spontaneous interest –he would, presumably, prefer that Duncan grow up to be interested in a profitable scientific career, rather than in the insecure life of the artist.

Inevitably, despite his good intentions, his economically motivated abuse of his son's trust leads to a breakdown of Duncan's confidence in the responses of his parents to his own unpredictable needs:

Her son always refused shepherd's pie or any other food whose appearance disgusted him: spongy white tripe, soft penis-like sausages, stuffed sheep's hearts with their valves and little arteries. When one of these came before him he poked it uncertainly with his fork and said, "I don't want it."

"Why not?"

"It looks queer."

"But you havnae tasted it! Taste just a wee bit. For my sake." (L 122-23)

Taste in food presents a primitive synecdoche for the subjective preferences which Thaw no longer trusts his parents to recognise truly. As we might expect, such proud resentment must be punished. Not even a sound Scots thrashing, however, is quite enough to destroy Thaw's self-confidence. Accordingly,

On the advice of a neighbour they one day undressed the furiously kicking boy, filled a bath with cold water and plunged him in. The sudden chilling scald destroyed all his protest, and this treatment was used on later occasions with equal success. (L 123-24)

This treatment appears to work successfully; mealtimes seem no longer to be a flashpoint for Thaw's mistrust of his parents:

He stared at the mushy potato with particles of carrot, cabbage and mince in it and wondered if brains really looked like that. Fearfully he put some in his mouth and churned it with his

tongue. It tasted good so he ate what was on the plate and asked for more. When the meal was over his mother said, "There. You like it. Aren't ye ashamed of kicking up all that din about nothing?" (L 124).

This meal is an acknowledgement of the punitive Judaeo-Christian god. It is a latently anthrotheophagous ritual: 'Someone told Mrs. Thaw that the former tenants of her flat had killed themselves by putting their heads in the oven and turning the gas on' (L 122); and so 'after hearing how the former tenants had misused their oven he looked very thoughtfully at the shepherd's pie when it was brought to table that evening' (L 124). His communion with the 'shepherd', the Judaeo-Christian man-God, gives Thaw, like Peter Plottel in Friel's 'Brothers', the divinely inspired courage to face up to outlandish and ill-spoken tribes:

He was slightly appalled when the big boy turned and said, "What d'ye want, ye wee bugger?"

Thaw said, "I'm coming with you."

His scalp tightened, his heart knocked on his ribs but this boy had never eaten what he had eaten. (L 125)

This confidence in the face of uncertainty is granted by 'the weight of the food in his stomach making him feel excited and powerful' (L 124).

Nevertheless, Thaw soon abandons this kinship with the God of Calvinism. Succeeding events grant him a revelation of his relationship with a divine being distinct from, and higher than, the Judaeo-Christian divinity. In order to understand these events properly – and to appreciate their plausibility – it is necessary to draw together a number of sources. Firstly, we must become sensitive to the vocabulary of phenomenological vivacity which can be found in Gray's text. Let us examine a quotation which Thaw stumbles across from Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature*:

All the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call **IMPRESSIONS** and **IDEAS**. The difference between these consists of the degrees of force and liveliness with which they strike upon the mind, and make their way into our thought or consciousness. These perceptions, which enter with the most force or violence, we may name impressions; and under the name I may comprehend all our sensations, passions and emotions, as they make their first appearance in the soul. By *ideas* I mean the faint image of these in thinking and reasoning.... (L 161)

What is also interesting for our purposes is Hume's admission – absent from the text of *Lanark* – that this phenomenological distinction is not absolute:

Every one of himself will readily perceive the difference betwixt feeling and thinking. The common degrees of these are easily distinguished; tho' it is not impossible but in particular instances they may very nearly approach to each other. In sleep, in a fever, in madness, or in any very violent emotions of soul, our ideas may approach to our impressions: As on the other hand it sometimes happens, that our impressions are so faint and low, that we cannot distinguish them from our ideas.¹¹

Such states blur the distinction between perceiving and imagining: impressions may become as dull as thoughts, and ideas may have the vivacity of feeling. As we shall see, Thaw will come to both experience and cultivate this inversion of phenomenological vivacity.

At this point, we should also recall Malinowski's assertion that magic has its primitive beginnings in those 'very violent emotions of the soul' which Hume regarded as so extraordinary: 'a strong emotional experience which spends itself in a purely subjective flow of images, words, and acts of behaviour, leaves a very deep

¹¹ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. by L.A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), pp.1-2.

conviction of its reality, as if of some practical and positive achievement.’¹² These ideas, though part of the subjective world, nonetheless seem endowed with an objective efficacy: ‘The substitute action in which the passion finds its vent, and which is due to impotence, has subjectively all the value of a real action, to which emotion would, if not impeded, naturally have led.’¹³ Magical thoughts are instances of inverted vivacity: they strike with the force of impressions, and lead to a feeling of genuine accomplishment. We should note, then, the consonance between this analysis of magic and Gray’s depiction of the way in which Mr Thaw gives Duncan the courage to face a fight with Coulter:

“Duncan, you’ll have to fight this boy. If ye start running away now you’ll never learn to face up to life. I’ll teach ye how to fight – it’s easy – all ye have to do is use your left hand to protect your face....”

Mr. Thaw talked like this until Thaw’s head was full of images of defeating Coulter. He spent that evening practising for the fight. First he sparred with his father, but the opposition of a real human being left no scope for fantasy, so he practised on a cushion and went confidently to bed after a good supper. (L 133)

These vivid images of victory give Thaw confidence when confronted with this dangerous uncertainty. Gray, then, portrays such states of inverted vivacity as a common part of human life, and shows that they may occur under conditions of mental stress.

It is useful to here refer briefly to Gray’s poem ‘To Andrew, before One’.¹⁴ In this poem, the speaker asserts that, for his infant son, ‘to feel, think, dream and do are all the same’. This state of mind is overthrown by social demands to recognise a

¹² Bronislaw Malinowski, ‘Magic, Science and Religion’, in *Science, Religion and Reality*, ed. by Joseph Needham (London: Sheldon, 1925), pp.19-84 (p.75).

¹³ Malinowski, ‘Magic, Science and Religion’, p.75.

distinction between subjective and objective worlds: “‘You shall not’ makes him know he is not God,/ dividing think from feel and dream from do.’ This lack of distinction between object and subject – to which we have seen Hume allude, and which Malinowski develops at length – is an important feature of infantile mental life. This ‘adualism’ of childish thinking was much remarked by Jean Piaget. Given the size and extent of Piaget’s work, it is convenient to refer – initially, at least – to Habermas’s summary:

Piaget follows this development of intelligence in connection with the “construction of the external and internal universes”; there gradually emerges “a demarcation through the construction of the universe of objects and of the internal universe of the subject.” The growing child works out for himself, equiprimordially, the concepts of the external and internal worlds in dealing practically with objects and with himself. Piaget also draws a distinction between dealing with physical objects and dealing with social objects, that is, “reciprocal action between a subject and objects and reciprocal action between a subject and other subjects.” Correspondingly the external universe is differentiated into the world of perceptible and manipulable objects on the one hand and the world of normatively regulated interpersonal relations on the other.¹⁵

The child, therefore, is also unable initially to distinguish action on things from action between people. It is a stressful cognitive regression to this second adualism – the lack of distinction between objective and social worlds – with which we must now concern ourselves. Thaw’s communion with the Judaeo-Christian deity, as we saw, gives him the confidence to approach the alien children who scavenge in the middens. He attempts to impress them with his mastery of the magical language of the middle-class:

¹⁴ Alasdair Gray, *Old Negatives: Four Verse Sequences* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1989), p.49.

¹⁵ Jurgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, trans. by Thomas McCarthy, 2 vols (Cambridge: Oxford; Polity: Blackwell, 1991), I, p.68.

“Why does the smart wee boy no’ believe the donkey’s a hundred?”

“Because I read it in an ENCYCLOPAEDIA,” said Thaw, for though he was still unable to read he had once pleased his parents by saying encyclopaedia without being specially taught and the word had peculiar qualities for him. (L 127)

His rage at their subsequent mocking response is a violent emotional reaction of the kind which makes thought blot out sensation: ‘Thaw was blinded by red rage and screamed, “Buggers! Ye damned buggers!” and started running down the darkening street” (L 127). Thaw’s cognitive regression is further intensified when he finds himself uncertain of the route home:

The dark, similar streets seemed endlessly to open out of each other until he despaired of getting home and sat on the kerb with his face in his hands and gined aloud. He fell into a dwam in which he felt only the hard kerb under his backside. (L 128)

In this state conducive to adualism, it seems that his cry of despair is answered. A heavenly force – distinct from the Judaeo-Christian deity – manifests itself in order to guide him back to his homeland:

[he] awoke suddenly with a hushing sound in his ears. For a second this seemed like his mother singing to him then he recognized the noise of waterfalls. The sky had cleared and a startling moon had risen. Though not full there was enough of it to light the canal embankment across the road, and the gate, and the cinder path. (L 128)

The moon then vents its wrath from a home beyond the sky:

As he stepped off the bridge Thaw seemed to hear the moon yell at him. It was the siren. Its ululations came eerily across the rooftops to menace him, the only life. He ran down the path between the nettles and through the gate and past the dark allotments. The siren swooned into silence and a little later (Thaw had never hear this before) there was a dull iron noise, gron-

gron-gron-gron, and dark shapes passed above him. Later there were abrupt thuddings as if giant fists were battering a metal ceiling over the city. (L 128)

Finally, as if by some providence, Thaw is re-united with his family, and saved from the anger of the moon-deity: 'Beyond the power station he ran his head into the stomach of a warden running the other way. "Duncan!" shouted the man' (L 129).

It may seem unrealistic for Gray to attribute the power to create a religion to this childish character. Nevertheless, such a phenomenon is discussed in Piaget's analysis of childish attempts to relate intersubjectively to the objective world. Such animism is 'extremely general and also very spontaneous'¹⁶; it is only completely lost, 'after 10-11, on an average'.¹⁷ One of Piaget's examples emphasises the ease with which an intersubjective relation to nature may arise in children:

We shall start by giving some adult recollections. Those of deaf-mutes are particularly important, since they show the affective tonality which animism may assume among children who have received no trace of religious education.

James quotes the case of a deaf-mute, Thomas d'Estrella, who became a professor, and left an account of his early recollections. D'Estrella tells how nothing aroused his curiosity so greatly as the moon. He feared it yet always loved to watch it. He noted the impression of a face in the full moon and thence supposed it to be a living Being. [...] When he went for a walk he would look to see if the moon was following him and it seemed to do so wherever he went.¹⁸

Thaw's implicit belief that the moon has granted him the good fortune to find his way home is also in accord with Piaget's assertion that 'the child cannot grasp the idea of the 'given,' and he refuses to admit that experience contains fortuitous concurrences

¹⁶ Jean Piaget, *The Child's Conception of the World*, trans. by Joan and Andrew Tomlinson (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & co., 1929), p.214.

¹⁷ Piaget, *Child's Conception of the World*, p.215.

¹⁸ Piaget, *Child's Conception of the World*, pp.207-8.

which simply happen without being accounted for'.¹⁹ Instead of admitting uncertainty into the world, the child seeks explanation in terms of agency:

we find the child trying to find the reason or justification for a whole number of facts which for us are inexplicable because they are due to chance: why there is a big and a little Saleve mountain, why pigeons are like eagles, why one person has smaller ears than another, etc. [...] Law may be arbitrary in the sense that the will of gods or of men may be capricious; but chance is banished from nature, for everything admits of justification or of motivation, since everything in nature has been willed.²⁰

These characteristics of the juvenile mind, however, are not the only factors which help create Thaw's personal religion. It is also important that his parents seem to acknowledge his animistic relation to external nature:

Thaw was very uneasy. His adventure with the midden-rakers was a horrid crime than not eating dinner so he expected punishment on an unusually large scale. After closely watching his mother that day [...] he became sure that punishment was not in her mind, and this worried him. He feared pain, but deserved to be hurt, and was not going to be hurt. He had not returned to exactly the same house. (L 129)

Though, in truth, his parents are merely relieved that he is alive, it seems to Thaw that they implicitly accept that his relation to the moon protects him from punishment for wandering off on a whim. He has, therefore, found a transcendent kinship which can shield him from the prevalent Calvinist ascription of guilt to those who would follow their spontaneous interests. Without such a redemptive kinship, Thaw's original sin would lead him to expect the divine wrath inflicted on the rest of Glasgow by the owner of the 'giant fists' which seemed to batter 'a metal ceiling over the sky'.

¹⁹ Jean Piaget, *The Language and Thought of the Child*, trans. by Marjorie Gabain, 3rd edn (Routledge and Kegan Paul: London, 1959), p.184.

It is in order to assure himself of his redemption from such divine anger that Thaw's imaginative life becomes filled with prophetic motifs. During his evacuation from Glasgow, the imagery of the cold bath treatment is woven into the myth of the Flood: 'It struck him that the sea was behind these hills; if he stood among the trees he would look down on a grey sea sparkling with waves' (L 130). His mother assures him that this is untrue, but he cannot shake off this forceful image: 'The sparkling grey sea was too vivid for him to disbelieve. It fought in his head with a picture of farms and fields until it seemed to be flooding them' (L 131). Thaw not only imagines himself as Noah fleeing the flood; he also regards himself as Moses, leading the chosen people to the Promised Land – or even as Christ leading the redeemed to Heaven:

Thaw trudged along the coast road at the head of a mob of about thirty or forty [...]. He wanted to seem mysterious to these boys, someone ageless with strange powers, but his feet were sore, he was late for tea and afraid he would be blamed for arriving with so many friends. He was right. The hostel gateman refused to allow the other boys in. (L 132)

These Judaeo-Christian motifs are woven into a pagan worship of the moon – Thaw's guardian during the air-raid. This becomes clear when we examine Thaw's apparent anxiety for companionship: 'During the first few weeks at school he had looked carefully among the girls for one to adventure with in his imagination, but they were all too obviously the same vulgar clay as himself' (L 135). As his aspiration beyond the flesh suggests, he is really seeking an incarnation of the moon; he settles finally to meditate upon an Artemis-like figure in an advertisement: 'Then one day when

²⁰ Jean Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Physical Causality*, trans. by Marjorie Gabain (Totowa, New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams, & co., 1972), p.275.

visiting the village store he saw a placard in the window advertising Amazon Adhesive Shoe Soles. It showed a blond girl in brief Greek armour with spear and shield and a helmet on her head' (L 135).

Thaw's belief in a moon-goddess who annuls the guilt of his spontaneity is intensified when his lack of trust in his parents begins another displaced conflict with his father:

[Mr. Thaw:] "For a century mountaineers have gone up the Alps and Himalayas and Grampians in nailed climbing boots. You might think they knew about climbing. Oh, no, Duncan Thaw knows better. They should have worn *sandals*."
 "What's wrong for them might be right for me." (L 136)

The shock treatment is again employed: 'The discussion continued until Mr. Thaw lost his temper and Thaw had hysterics and was given a cold bath' (L 136).

Nevertheless, Thaw does attempt to climb Ben Rua.

On the grey-green tip of the summit he seemed just able to see a figure, a vertical white speck that moved and gestured, though the movement might have been caused by a flickering of warm air between the mountaintop and his eye. To Thaw the movement suggested a woman in a white dress waving and beckoning. He could even imagine her face: it was the face of the girl in the adhesive shoe-sole advertisement. This remote beckoning woman struck him with the force of a belief, though it was not quite a belief. (L 140)

The incarnate moon goddess – conceived with the vivacity of an impression – summons Thaw, approving of his spontaneous desire to climb Ben Rua like some sandalled Biblical prophet. Thus, when Thaw returns, he has the courage to proudly announce this successful feat of daring. His parents' pleasure at this sudden burst of physical exercise confirms unwittingly their subordination to the will of the goddess:

"You were up Ben Rua?"

"Aye."

"Alone?"

"Aye."

His mother said gently, "That could have been dangerous, Duncan."

His father looked at his sandalled feet and said, "If you do it again you must tell someone you're going first, so we know where to look if there's an accident. But I don't think we'll complain this time; no, we won't complain, we won't complain." (L 145)

It is therefore by this belief system that Thaw holds out against the guilt which would otherwise have him assent to his father's ascription to him of feelings and interests which he does not truly possess. For example, we see Thaw apparently intending to cultivate an interest in natural history: 'He felt confident and resolute, for he had been reading a book called *The Young Naturalist* and meant to make notes of anything interesting' (L 137). However, he soon deviates from this consonance with his father's misattribution:

Taking out a notebook and pencil he drew a map on the blank first page, showing the position of the winkles; then he wrote the date on the opposite page and added after some thought the letters:

SELKNIW ELPRUP NI ECIDRAWOC

for he wished to hide his discoveries under a code until he was ready to publish. [...] Tired of being a naturalist he found a stick of driftwood and began engraving the plans of a castle on the firm surface. (L 137)

He is therefore able to preserve for himself an unashamed consciousness of his own artistic and literary inclinations; and thus, he can consciously cultivate his talents: 'Thaw sat drawing and writing for hours at a tiny desk in the back bedroom' (L 146). By virtue of his personal religion, Thaw's assent to his father's implicit wishes is merely conscious insincerity, and not unconscious self-deception:

[Mr. Thaw:] "Have you any notion of what you would like to be?"

Thaw considered. In the past he had wanted to be a king, magician, explorer, archaeologist, astronomer, inventor and pilot of spaceships. More recently, while scribbling in the back bedroom, he had thought of writing stories or painting pictures.

He hesitated and said, "A doctor." (L 148)

His core of guiltless spontaneity can, however, be maintained only by an intensification of his fantasy life. At primary school, 'Thaw told long stories with himself as hero [...]. The vivid part of his life became imaginary' (L 134). By the time Thaw has reached high school, this reversal of phenomenological vivacity is complete. Like Mr Alfred, Thaw refuses to ascribe reality to his embodied existence: 'Apparent life was a succession of dull habits in which he did what was asked automatically, only resenting demands to show interest. His energy had withdrawn into imaginary worlds and he had none to waste on reality' (L 157). His real life is, he feels, led in the dreams of secular soteriology which fill his waking hours:

He was a survivor of the third world war. The poisonous radiations which had killed most of his contemporaries had, by a fluke, given him eternal youth. In two or three centuries of wandering about the shattered earth he had become leader of a small group of people who had come to trust his gentleness and wisdom. He had brought them to the crater, protected by its walls from the envy of a bygone age, to build a republic where nobody was sick, poor or forced to live by work they hated. (L 158)

Such forceful ideas blot out sensation:

when walking home from school or public library, these adventures filled his head and chest with such intoxicating emotions that he had to run hard to be relieved of them and often found he had come through several streets without remembering anything of the people, houses or traffic. (L 158)

Thaw, however, comes to feel alienated from even his fantastic life of kinship with the moon goddess. When his artistic hopes seem to have failed, he interprets this outcome as a result of alienation from his deity. To have been an artist, it would have been necessary to 'eat the bloody moon' – to partake of the substance of the materialised goddess:

"I had this work of art I wanted to make [...]; something epic, mibby, with the variety of facts and the clarity of fancies and all of it seen in pictures with a queer morbid intense colour [....]. I had to read poetry and hear music and study philosophy and write and draw and paint. I had to learn how things and people felt and were made and behave and how the human body worked and its appearance and proportions in different situations. In fact, I had to eat the bloody moon!" (L 210).

Without the protection afforded by divine recognition, fate will punish him for the sin of spontaneity:

[Mr. Thaw:] "Show me an alternative to the library service and I'll help you toward it." Tears slid down Thaw's immobile face. He said harshly, "I can't. There's no alternative. I have no choice but to cooperate with my damnation." (L 211)

Thaw also therefore finds an explanation for his asthma in terms of his religious life:

he moved in a moment from fear to utter panic and leaped from bed with a cawing scream, stumbled to the window and clutched back the curtain. A gold flake of moon, a dim wisp of cloud hung above the opposite chimneys. He glared at them like words he could not read and tried to scream again. (L 160)

The goddess, it seems, has abandoned him. Thaw reaches this implicit interpretation because of the sadistic fantasies which accompany his sexual arousal:

after brooding on the mine a few minutes his penis would yearn to touch something, and if denied this help often exploded by itself, leaving a sodden stain in his trousers and a self-contempt so great that it included all his imaginary worlds. He was as much estranged from imagination as from reality. (L 159)

His asthma is woven into a personal theodicy based on this self-disgust; it is a foretaste of hellish alienation from the goddess: 'At the height of the panic, while glaring at the irrelevant moon, his one thought had been a certainty that Hell was worse than this' (L 160). When his asthma is at its worst, he is, he believes, in a world of damnation where "everything I want is impossible" (L 294):

"No kindly future will ever repair a past as vile as ours, and even if we do achieve a worldwide democratic socialist state it won't last. Nothing decent lasts. All that lasts is this mess of fighting and pain and I object to it! I object! I object!" (L 295-96).²¹

Thaw's compensatory religion can therefore shield him only to a certain extent from a belief in punitive fatalism. Since his kinship with the moon-goddess is indicated by good fortune, any suffering or misfortune threatens his sense of self-confident exemption from original sin. It is this factor which perverts both his sexual and artistic activity. When Thaw's locker is robbed during his first day at art school, this bad luck seems a token of his alienation from the goddess. Accordingly, his sense of original sin is apparent when he confesses the loss to his father:

²¹ When we examine Mr. Thaw's response to his son's despair, we are back on the territory mapped by Friel in his analysis of Marxist soteriology. Mr Thaw is not rationally expectant; rather, he is literally confident in a certain outcome. The self-mortifying meek will inherit: "It isn't the loud men on platforms but the obscure toilers who change things" (L 295); after fire has cleansed the earth of the "damned power cliques" (L 295), the obscure toilers alone will ascend through the "steep upward climb" (L295) of a putatively necessary historical progression towards the secular heaven of "a real civilisation" (L 295). Mr Thaw is, in the strictest sense, as hopeless as his son: Duncan is

[Mr Thaw:] "What were you afraid of? Did you think I'd thrash you?"
 "I deserve to be thrashed." (L 235)

Under the rationalisation of saving to the value of the stolen goods, he undergoes a process of self-mortification:

Next morning he rose at seven, walked to school to save tram fares and dined on a cheap pie. This left him hungry but came to seem sufficient in two or three days, then he lost appetite for it and drank a cup of milk instead. Daily his stomach grew content with less. His mind was clenched, his surface reinforced against surrounding life. (L 228)

This asceticism guards him against the stimuli of the external world: 'All sounds, even words spoken nearby, seemed dulled by intervening glass' (L 228). Thaw is in a condition conducive to adualism; his fatigue and hunger place him in one of those Humean borderline states in which 'our impressions are so faint and low, that we cannot distinguish them from our ideas.' This allows him to direct more of his energy towards his religious life. The colour yellow, an association with the 'gold flake' (L160) of the moon, animates external nature, triggering Thaw's sexual and emotional responses:

Yet while he looked on people with the cold interest usually felt for things, the world of things began to cause surprising emotions. A haulage vehicle carrying a huge piece of bright yellow machinery swelled his heart with tenderness and stiffened his penis with lust. A section of tenement, the surface a dirty yellow plaster with oval holes through which brickwork showed, gave the eerie conviction he was beholding a kind of flesh. (L 228)

convinced of the impossibility of his desires; Mr Thaw is convinced of the necessity of his own predictions – both, however, fail to attach contingency to propositions concerning the future.

Thaw therefore proceeds to seek out the avatar of the lunar goddess. He finds her, he believes, in Molly Tierney, 'the velvet-voiced girl with blond curls' (L 229). As he sits with her at informal communion in Brown's cakeshop, she seems filled with a divine light:

Sounds of people moving and conversing at other tables blurred and receded, but tiny noises nearby (MacBeth's breathing, a spoon striking a saucer) were magnified and distinct. Molly Tierney came into sharp focus. The colours of her hair, skin, mouth and dress grew clearer like a stained-glass figure with light increasing behind it. Second by second her body was infused with the significance of mermaids on rocks and Cleopatra in her barge. (L 230)

Molly is merely a transparency behind which is the light of the moon-goddess who would relieve Thaw of his guilt over his ethical spontaneity. She therefore revives the same need which fuelled Thaw's schoolboy infatuation with Kate Caldwell:

The Latin students queued at the door of another classroom opening out of the hall. [...] It took Thaw a second to notice and fall in love with the loveliest of them. She was blond and wore a light dress, so he looked loftily round the hall with an absent-minded frown hoping she would notice his superior indifference. (L 150)

Thaw would feel superior to the commonality by virtue of his kinship with the goddess. This is why he wonders if Kate would love him for his priestly vision:

He bent over a page of axioms, pretending to concentrate but working inwardly on a new story. The elation in his chest recalled the summit of Rua. He remembered the sunlit moor and the beckoning white speck and wondered if these things could be used in a story and if Kate Caldwell would read it and be impressed. (L 154)

Molly, however – like Kate before her – reveals herself to be an illusory incarnation:

Her voice became a mixture of babyish and whorish. "Jimmy, it's my architecture homework. This model cathedral we've to make. I've tried to make it but I can't, [...]. Will you make it for me? I'll pay for the materials, of course." (L 231)

Thaw's reaction is one of vividly imagined contempt for this false idol: "A voice in Thaw's head raved at MacBeth, "Spit in her face! Go on, spit in her face!" (L 231). On his walk home, lunar imagery betokens his disenchantment with Molly: 'Clock dials glowed like fake moons on invisible towers' (L 231).

Thaw therefore also tries to approach the moon-goddess through the production of religious iconography. On his first day at art school, he comes across a tree which seems to symbolise his own soul:

He looked through a doorway and saw a huge unhealthy tree. It grew in a patch of bare earth among pale-green rhubarb-shaped weeds; it divided at the roots into two scaly limbs, one twisting along the ground, the other shooting up to the height of the third-storey windows; each limb, almost naked of branches, supported at the end a bush of withered leaves. (L 227)

Thaw's perverted ethos is apparent in this tree: his imaginative life is overdeveloped, while his feelings for real others remain stunted and displaced. Nevertheless, he leaves 'feeling triumphant' (L 227) – this fortuitous encounter seems like an approving communication from some mysterious providence. Accordingly, he sketches an idea for a painting using 'the tree on Sauchiehall Lane' (L 236); and finishes the sketch with 'a moon in the sky above the treetop' (L 236). Although this work is not especially well-received, a subsequent sketch is published in a newspaper. This recognition restores his faith in his eventual communion with the goddess: 'the published photograph gave him a moment's pleasure of almost sexual potency. He went over to the refectory in a mood of unusual confidence' (L 246).

Soon, a significant piece of accidental causation comes his way:

One evening Thaw came down to Sauchiehall Street when the air was mild and the lamps not yet lit. So fine a lake of yellow sky lay behind the western rooftops that he walked toward them in a direction opposite home and was overtaken by Aitken Drummond at Charing Cross. (L 253)

As a result of this fortuitous meeting – consequent upon his attraction to the colour yellow – he goes to the art-school ball with Aitken, and is introduced to Marjory Laidlaw. Their relationship revives another motif from Thaw's schoolboy infatuation with Kate Caldwell. Kate's place in his fantasies of transcendental kinship is indicated by his attitude to co-incidence:

He had crossed the main road one morning and was descending a short street when Kate Caldwell came out of a close mouth in front of him and walked toward school [...]. He followed excitedly, meaning to overtake but lacking the courage. (L 156)

Thaw cannot simply approach Kate; he has instead to await an uncoordinated intersection in time and space:

After this he hoped each day she would come from the close at the exact moment he passed it so he could speak to her without lowering himself, but either he didn't see her at all or she emerged ahead and he had to follow as if towed by an invisible rope. (L 157)

Thaw's providential encounter with Marjory indicates to him that she is the vehicle of communion with the moon-goddess. Accordingly, he regards her with a religious awe:

He sat on the upper deck watching the pure line of her face and throat against the black window. They filled him with delight and terror for he would need to cross over to them and

he hadn't much time. He stared desperately, trying to learn what to do by intensity of vision. (L 265)

If he wins Marjory, then he wins self-certainty in his artistic vocation; her sexual favours will be an erotic communion with the goddess by which he can annul his sense of guilt. The mixture of delight and terror arises because Marjory is an index either of his salvation or of his damnation – of recognition of his talent, or of misrecognition, frustration and failure. Since Thaw's religious attitude negates the contingency of Marjory's response, confidence and despair co-exist in him simultaneously: "It's queer. When I ask for something I'm usually sure you'll give it, but I sweat as if I'd no chance at all" (L 266). It is only in the correct sacred context that Thaw can simply feel confident:

Nearby an almost full moon was freckled by the top leaves of an elm. The river gurgled faintly against its clay bank, the distant fountain tinkled. Marjory said, "Lovely." He said, "I've once or twice felt moments when calmness, unity and ... and glory seemed the core of things. Have you ever felt that?" (L 285).

This epiphany gives Thaw security against uncertainty; he feels assured that the moon-goddess will recognise his artistry.

Thaw, of course, does not attempt to learn from Marjory of his own unpredictable selfhood; rather he seeks to use her only in the religious ritual which reassures him about who he already is:

He stopped and gripped her arm. "Marjory, can I draw you? Naked, I mean?" She stared. He said eagerly, "I won't be embarrassed – my picture needs you." (L 286)

As Thaw's reference to the needs of his picture implies, his desire for Marjory treats her only as the vessel of the goddess. A dream clarifies the solitary self-assertion of his sexuality:

Thaw dreamed he was fornicating awkwardly with Marjory, who stood naked and erect like a caryatid. He rode astride her hips, holding himself off the ground by gripping her sides with knees and arms. The cold rigid body stayed inert at first then gradually began to vibrate. He had a thin, lonely sensation of triumph. (L 276)

A 'caryatid' is 'a female figure used instead of a column to support an entablature'²², and etymologically, it derives from a Greek term for 'a priestess of Artemis'²³. Marjory is a sacred prostitute through whom Thaw would attain communion with the lunar deity.

We find, then, that many of the motifs familiar to us from the study of Friel recur in the work of Alasdair Gray. Thaw, like Mr Alfred, retreats from his alienated being into a life which posits the greater reality of fantasy. In this imaginary existence, Thaw seeks self-confidence in much the same way as Percy Phinn in *The Boy Who Wanted Peace*. Both Thaw and Percy find validation in their transcendental kinship with some personal deity. Of course, unlike Percy, Duncan Thaw is actually suited to the life of an artist – his ambition is not mere vanity. Nevertheless, Thaw is, like Percy, without a circle of trusted others with whom to know himself recognitively, and this, as we shall see, leads him to an increasingly inauthentic and frustrated existence.

²² Chamber's, p.201.

²³ Chamber's, p.201.

Depersonalisation and Dragonhide

It is the destruction of Thaw's intimate relations to which we must now turn our attention. His pursuit of the goddess insulates him from his family and friends. This refusal to recognise the mundane beings around him is represented by the dragonhide which afflicts him when he is reborn as Lanark. In order to understand this condition – and the other diseases – I again make reference to the influence of R.D. Laing. He provides a hermeneutic guide through the psychopathologies of recognition which are represented metaphorically in Gray's narrative.

Let us begin by examining the effect of Thaw's withdrawal into a life of fantasy upon his developing psyche. One might think that Thaw could not avoid recognitive interaction with his own family; but even their reality is less vivid than fantasy:

I must be a very cold selfish kind of person. If Mum died I honestly don't think I'd feel much about it. [...] Yet when reading a poem by Poe last week, Thou wast all that to me, love, for which my soul did pine, etc., I felt a very poignant sense of loss and wept six tears. (L 190)

From his father's announcement of Mrs. Thaw's terminal condition onwards, Thaw's grief seems almost entirely absent:

"Does she know?"

"No. Not yet."

Thaw turned his face away and wept a little in the darkness. His tears were not particularly passionate, just a weak bleeding of water at the eyes. (L 196)

It would seem that Thaw is without sorrow at his mother's condition:

For several days on returning from school he took his shoes off and lay beside his mother holding her hand. It would have been untrue to say he felt unhappy. At these times he hardly thought or felt at all, and did not talk, for Mrs. Thaw was becoming unable to talk. Usually he looked out at the street. (L 197)

However, as the narrator's later remark reveals, Thaw's grief does exist: 'Grief pulled at an almost unconscious corner of his mind like a puppy trying to attract its master's attention by tugging the hem of his coat' (L 203). It is left to Coulter to attempt to bring Thaw to self-awareness:

Coulter towelled his hands, looking at Thaw closely. He said, "You shouldn't hold it in, Duncan. It'll be worse for you later."
 "I don't think I'm holding anything in." (L 198)

A further lack of self-knowledge becomes apparent when we examine Thaw's fantasies more closely: 'He could only feel near to women when rescuing them, and often envied the villains who could humiliate or torture them. His position made it impossible to imagine doing such things himself' (L 158). As Thaw's perceptions demonstrate, he can only conceive of sexuality in terms of aggression: 'One morning he saw something that kept him on the shore longer than usual. Beside the island two swans faced each other in such an intent way that he thought they were going to fight' (L 165). Violence is the closest Thaw can come to imagining for himself his own passionate desire to produce overwhelming sensations in another person: 'His other imaginary world was enjoyed in the genitals. It was a secret gold mine in Arizona which a gang of bandits worked by slave labour. Thaw was bandit chief and spent his time inventing and practising tortures for the slaves' (L 158). We should remember,

of course, that it is only his imagination which represents 'pictures of men being whipped and branded' (L 159) as the object of his sexual desire. This is not something Thaw has learnt through recognitive self-discovery; and this is emphasised in his reflections upon his own sexuality:

Sex was something he had discovered squatting on the bedroom floor. It was so disgusting that it had to be indulged secretly and not mentioned to others. It fed on dreams of cruelty, had its climax in a jet of jelly and left him feeling weak and lonely. (L 165)

Thaw can imagine his sexual desire only as cruelty; but this is because his solitary and contemplative life cannot lead to self-discovery. Thus, it is again Coulter who would attempt to make Thaw aware of his authentic feelings:

"Admit you'd sooner look at that comic than read your art criticism."
Coulter pointed at the cover of a neighbour's comic. It showed a blonde in a bathing costume being entwined by a huge serpent. Thaw opened his mouth to deny this, then frowned and shut it. Coulter said, "Come on, that picture makes your cock prick, doesn't it? Admit you're like the rest of us." (L 164-65)

Thaw, however, could never willingly accept Coulter's subsequent advice that "Mibby it's a mistake to start with Kate Caldwell. You should practise on someone else first. Practise on my girl, big June Haig" (L 173). Rather than trust Coulter, or Big June, he continues to pursue the avatar of the imaginary goddess who gives him faith in his artistic and literary ethos. It is this mental picture which drags Thaw away from intersubjective recognition:

After Thaw had gone forward a few yards by himself he heard a cry from behind. He turned and saw Coulter wave and shout, "Don't worry! Don't worry! Tae hell with Kate Caldwell!"

Thaw walked onward with a small perfect image of Kate Caldwell smiling and beckoning inside him. (L 175)

The pursuit of this image draws Thaw into an allegorical performance of the monadic and contemplative self-ignorance brought about by his animistic beliefs:

It was possible to imagine that the trunk between his arms contained the body of a woman. He hugged it, pressed his face against it and whispered, "I'm here. I'm here. Will you come out?" He imagined the woman's body pressing the other side of the bark, her lips wrestling to meet his lips, but he felt nothing but roughness. (L 176)

Thaw is, of course, as Frazer might remind us, a worshipper of Diana, the Roman equivalent to Artemis:

the mortal King of the Wood had for his queen the woodland Diana herself. If the sacred tree which he guarded with his life was supposed, as seems probable, to be her special embodiment, her priest may not only have worshipped it as his goddess but embraced it as his wife. [...] Even in the time of Pliny a noble Roman used thus to treat a beautiful beech-tree in another sacred grove of Diana on the Alban hills. He embraced it, he kissed it, he lay under its shadow, he poured wine on its trunk. Apparently he took the tree for the goddess.²⁴

We, however, see that the pursuit of this imaginary figure leads Thaw further and further away from the recognitive relations which might reveal his own selfhood. His artistic-cum-religious endeavour will, he hopes, free him from the need to love real women: he reflects resentfully, '*Cannibal queens carnivorous nightingales why should I feel my value depends on being valued by women, what makes them the bestowers of value?*' (L 236). Consequently, his insulation from social interaction becomes more pronounced as his fantasy life intensifies. He tells Ruth, "What I'm

²⁴ J.G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, abridged edn ([London(?)]: MacMillan, 1922; repub. London and Basingstoke: Pan MacMillan, 1987), p.8.

doing just now is more important than anything else happening in this whole city” (L 237). When she dares to damage his painting, he turns to violence: ‘he stooped and twice drove his fist hard into her stomach’ (L 237). His subsequent apology is quite perfunctory:

He said coldly, “I’m sorry.”

He could only think of the grey smear on the picture. Coldness and indifference spread through him like a stain. (L 238)

He cares less and less for the recognition of these once loved others. He does not even see his own cruel selfishness reflected in Ruth’s recognitive response: ““God, how I hate you! How I hate you!”” (L 237). So long as the painting goes well, Thaw is convinced of the inspirational acknowledgement of the goddess; and that is all that matters: ‘Mr. Thaw made tea that evening and the family ate in silence. Inside himself Thaw was very cheerful indeed but hid the feeling because the others could not share it. Afterward he began the picture again and finished it three days later’ (L 238).

In order to understand properly Thaw’s insulation from the feelings of those around him, we should turn to the bodily disorders which dominate the third book of *Lanark*. Before we can begin their analysis, it is necessary to rebut the suggestion of Gray’s critic that ‘the dragonhide which infects the first six chapters is a Difplag of the muscular constriction Reich calls “armouring”’ (L 496). Certainly, Wilhelm Reich has a concept which might provide a translation of dragonhide: ‘People who are brought up with a negative attitude toward life and sex acquire a pleasure anxiety,

which is physiologically anchored in chronic muscular spasms.²⁵ These muscular contractions repress feelings, and this bodily armour leads to a loss of authentic expression:

A conflict which is fought out at a certain age always leaves behind a trace in the person's character. This trace is revealed as a hardening of the character. It functions automatically and is difficult to eliminate. The patient does not experience it as something alien; more often than not, he is aware of it as a rigidification or a loss of spontaneity.²⁶

Armour is removed by the restoration of the capacity for orgasm: 'Psychic health depends upon orgasmic potency, i.e., upon the degree to which one can surrender to and experience the climax of excitation in the natural sexual act.'²⁷

We shall see, however, that Reich's armour is rather different from dragonhide. Armour shields the subject from his or her own authentic needs; dragonhide, initially at least, protects the subject's authentic needs from the attributions of others. This difference is readily apparent when we consider the ways in which dragonhide might be translated into the realist content of both the Thaw narrative and *The Fall of Kelvin Walker*. This translation is confirmed when we consider the recognitive function of dragonhide in the Lanark narrative. Furthermore, Reich does not have a conceptual framework in which we might explain the bodily pathologies of the leeches, sponges, and rigorists. Laing's recognitive paradigm, however, proves fruitful for understanding these conditions.

²⁵ Wilhelm Reich, *The Function of the Orgasm: Sex-Economic Problems of Biological Energy*, trans. by Vincent R. Carfagno (London: Souvenir, 1983), p.7.

²⁶ Reich, p.145.

²⁷ Reich, p.6.

Let us, then, turn again to Laing. His work on the psychopathologies consequent upon the hypnotic misattribution of feelings is a useful way of understanding the relevance of dragonhide to the realist content of the first two books. Laing argues that one's identity depends upon the acknowledgement of others:

we have ego (self) and alter (other). We recognize that I have my own view of myself (direct perspective) in terms of which I establish my self-identity. However, self-identity is an abstraction.

We recognize furthermore that ego exists for alter. This gives my being-for-the-other, or one's identity for the other. The existence one has for the other is not that of the "I". For the other, *I* am another. The other I am for the other is a constant concern of us all.²⁸

For example,

I act in a way that is *cautious* to me, but *cowardly* to you.
 You act in a way that is *courageous* to you, but *foolhardy* to me.
 She sees herself as *vivacious*, but he sees her as *superficial*.²⁹

Laing is, in essence, espousing the Hegelian doctrine that 'self-consciousness exists [...] only by being acknowledged or "recognised"'.³⁰

Laing sees the origins of schizophrenia in a family context where, because of persistent inauthentic recognition by others, social relations do not lead to greater personal authenticity:

The characteristic family pattern that has emerged from the studies of the families of schizophrenics does not so much involve a child who is subject to outright neglect or even to obvious trauma, but a child who has been subjected to subtle but persistent disconfirmation,

²⁸ R.D. Laing, H. Phillipson, A.R. Lee, *Interpersonal Perception: A Theory and a Method of Research* (London and New York: Tavistock and Springer, 1966), p.5.

²⁹ Laing, Phillipson, Lee, p.11.

³⁰ G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. by J.B. Baillie, rev 2nd edn (London and New York: George Allen & Unwin and Humanities Press, 1949), p.229.

usually unwittingly. For many years lack of genuine confirmation takes the form of actively confirming a false self, so that the person whose false self is confirmed and real self disconfirmed is placed in a false position. Someone in a false position *feels guilt, shame, or anxiety at not being false*.³¹

The schizogenic family exemplifies precisely the cultural sickness identified by Gray in his novels. The Scottish man, as we have seen, assents to the ascription of guilt to his own unpredictable ethical being, and consequently comes to distrust all recognitive relations. Laing sees much the same pattern in the family of schizophrenics: the authentic being of the child is persistently disconfirmed, and a false self is consistently affirmed, until the need for ethical authenticity becomes a source of shame.

Laing notes that one defence mechanism against persistent inauthentic attribution is to refuse to recognise the other as a living subjectivity when he or she encroaches upon one's self-conception:

Depersonalization is a technique that is universally used as a means of dealing with the other when he becomes too tiresome or disturbing. One no longer allows oneself to be responsive to his feelings and may be prepared to regard him and treat him as though he had no feelings.³²

This defence is quite apparent in the realist books of *Lanark* when Thaw is interrupted while dreaming up a new story in his maths class, and protects his artistic subjectivity by depersonalising the teacher:

He stared at the teacher's mouth opening and shutting and wondered why the words coming out could hurt like stones. His ear tried to get free by attending to the purr of a car moving slowly up the street outside and the faint shuffle of Kate Caldwell's feet. (L 154)

³¹ R.D. Laing, *Self and Others*, 2nd edn (London: Tavistock, 1969), pp.83-84.

³² R.D. Laing, *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Pelican, 1965), p.46.

If we examine *The Fall of Kelvin Walker*, then it becomes clear that muscular armour is also a means to depersonalisation:

Kelvin [...] compressed himself as nearly into an egg-shape as an angular man could. For a moment Hector McKellar feared this egg might roll off the chair but putting out a probing hand he found it muscularly rigid and perfectly stable. (K 132)

Kelvin's armour exists in order to maintain some self-confidence in face of the shame his father would attempt to engender in him:

Kelvin had tied his body in a knot for two reasons. One was to shield it from the flaying glance of the studio audience and of those extra millions who were surveying him through the cameras, the other was to protect a precious core of certainty from the shattering contempt of his father. (K 134)

This somatic response is a protection against the attribution of original sin: 'He heard his father say that his condition was not new – he had always gone like that after a good thrashing, and always took ten or twelve minutes to recover' (K 134).

The relation between depersonalisation and dragonhide becomes clearer as we examine Laing further. Depersonalisation, Laing informs us, becomes habitual and total under certain circumstances:

One may find oneself enlivened and the sense of one's own being enhanced by the other, or one may experience the other as deadening and impoverishing. A person may have come to anticipate that any possible relationship with another will have the latter consequences. Any other is then a threat to his 'self'.³³

³³ Laing, *Divided Self*, p.47.

This recognitive isolation – as we have seen in the character of Duncan Thaw – leads to an even more frustrated and inauthentic life which seems increasingly imperilled by relations with others. As Laing puts it:

to the schizoid individual every pair of eyes is in a Medusa's head which he feels has power actually to kill or deaden something precariously vital in him. He tries therefore to forestall his own petrification by turning others into stones.³⁴

This monadic conception of autonomy is appropriate to one of Gray's dragons:

[Lanark:] "You want to mix me with someone else's despair, and I hate despair! I want to be free, and freedom is freedom from other people!"
Ozenfant smiled and nodded. He said, "A very dragonish sentiment! But you are no longer a dragon. It is time you learned a different sentiment." (L 70)

In Ozenfant's explanation of dragonhide, 'heat' substantialises the metaphorical warmth of fulfilling and creative recognitive relations with others:

"The heat made by a body should move easily through it, overflowing the pores, penis, anus, eyes, lips, limbs and fingertips in acts of generosity and self-preservation. But many people are afraid of the cold and try to keep more heat than they give, they stop the heat from leaving through an organ or limb, and the stopped heat forges the surface into hard insulating armour." (L 68)

Dragonhide creates much the same vicious circle of spiralling distrust as petrification:

"since men feel the heat they receive more than the heat they create the armour makes the remaining human parts feel colder. So do they strip it off? Seldom. Like nations losing unjust wars they convert more and more of themselves into armour when they should surrender or retreat. So someone may start by limiting only his affections or lust or intelligence, and eventually heart, genitals, brain, hands and skin are crusted over." (L 68)

³⁴ Laing, *Divided Self*, p.76.

Laing, indeed, uses the same military metaphor:

If the whole of the individual's being cannot be defended, the individual retracts his lines of defence until he withdraws within a central citadel. [...] But the tragic paradox is that the more the self is defended in this way, the more it is destroyed. The apparent eventual destruction and dissolution of the self in schizophrenic conditions is accomplished not by external attacks from the enemy (actual or supposed), from without, but by the devastation caused by the inner defensive manoeuvres themselves.³⁵

The other diseases which Gray sketches for us further validate the use of an interpretative paradigm informed by Laing. There is, for example, the 'rigorist':

“[Lanark:] “What is a rigorist?”

[Ozenfant:] “One who bargains with his heat. Rigorists do not hold their heat in, they give it away, but only in exchange for fresh supplies. They are very dependable people, and when they go bad they crumble into crystals essential for making communication circuits.” (L 70)

The rigorist exists only in terms of the predictable security afforded by professional recognition. As the ex-soldier tells Lanark: “my life was so full of strenuous routines that I wouldn't have noticed had it not been for my disease. My whole professional life was a diseased and grandiose attack on my humanity” (L 55). He is, as it were, one-dimensional: “I grew to be nine feet tall and as brittle as glass. [...] The slightest sideways blow would have cracked me open.” (L 54) – he has no self-confidence outside of his professional achievement.

The ex-soldier also describes the remaining two diseases: “I seemed surrounded by leeches, using their vitality to steal vitality from others, and by sponges, hiding behind too many mouths” (L 54). These two conditions exist at the

opposite pole to the petrified or rigorous individual. Laing is again a useful guide to the perspective of the threatened self:

Utter detachment and isolation are regarded as the only alternative to a clam- or vampire-like attachment in which the other person's life-blood is necessary for one's own survival, and yet is a threat to one's survival. Therefore, the polarity is between complete isolation or complete merging of identity rather than between separateness and relatedness.³⁵

We find, then, that Gloopy has the vampire-like attachment appropriate to a leech:

a slurred voice said, "I feel we've never really understood each other."
Gloopy stood grinning emptily in the doorway. His legs were together and his arms pressed to his sides, his oiled grey hair and silver jacket glistened wetly. He took a few steps nearer, walking as if his thighs were glued together, then fell forward onto the floor with a sodden slap. (L 32)

Those who suffer from mouths – such as Gay – also undergo a merging of identity:

all he could see was a perfectly shaped white little hand, the fingers lightly clenched, until she unclenched them to show the palm. He took a moment to recognize what lay on it. A mouth lay on it, grinning sarcastically. It opened and said in a tiny voice, "You're trying to understand things, and that interests me."
It was Sludden's voice. (L 45)

She is, as it were, a pseudopodium stretching out from Sludden: 'Her feet were not engaging the slippery pavement, and though her body was light it felt as if an elastic cord fixed to her back were making forward movement more difficult with each step' (L 45). Where the petrified or the rigorous individual would be stubbornly assertive, the leech or the sponge tries to be wholly acquiescent to the other. In all the diseases,

³⁵ Laing, *Divided Self*, p.77.

³⁶ Laing, *Divided Self*, p.53.

though, the underlying condition remains the same: because of the danger perceived in others, the individual is unable to exist as a distinct person in a mutually recognitive relation to another independent consciousness.

We can extend further the relevance of Laing's work, if we recall one of the uses to which incurable cases are put. The catalyst tells Lanark of what happens to the sponges: "What do you think you've been eating? Have you never looked into the sink? Has nobody shown you the drains under the sponge-wards?" (L 89). Such cannibalism is, like dragonhide, another of Laing's metaphors made literal:

After this almost complete holocaust of one's experience on the altar of conformity, one is liable to feel somewhat empty, but one can try to fill one's emptiness up with money, consumer goods, position, respect, admirations, envy of one's fellows for their business, professional, social success. These together with a repertoire of distraction, permitted or compulsory, serve to distract one from one's own distraction: and if one finds oneself overworked, under too great a strain, there are perfectly approved additional lines of defence, concoctions to taste of, narcotics, stimulants, sedatives, tranquillizers to depress one further so that one does not know how depressed one is and to help one to over-eat and over-sleep.³⁷

This vast industry of distraction encourages the population to, as it were, devour the product of their own self-mutilated subjectivities:

We like the food served up elegantly before us: we do not want to know about the animal factories, the slaughterhouses, and what goes on in the kitchen. Our own cities are our own animal factories; families, schools, churches are the slaughterhouses of our children; colleges and other places are the kitchens. As adults in marriages and business, we eat the product.³⁸

With this accumulation of evidence for the fruitfulness of an interpretation which uses Laing, we may now proceed to analyse Lanark's relationship with Rima in

³⁷ Laing, 'Politics of the Family', p.101.

³⁸ Laing, 'Politics of the Family', pp.101-2.

terms of depersonalisation. Lanark's love-making brings him too close to Rima, and puts her in a position of vulnerability. She decides to repel him before he can damage her:

He felt relieved afterward and would have liked to sleep. He heard her rise briskly from his side and start dressing. She said curtly, "Well? Was it fun?"
He tried to think then said defiantly, "Yes. Great fun."
"How nice for you." (L 37)

It becomes clear that Rima is attempting to petrify Lanark in order to drive him away:

He was drowned in nightmare now, lying on the bottom of it as on an ocean bed, yet he could breathe. He said, "You're trying to kill me."
"Yes, but I won't manage. You're *terribly* solid."
She finished dressing and slapped his cheek briskly saying, "Come on. I can't apologize to you again. Get up and get dressed." (L 37)

Rima's cruel treatment is an attempt to kill Lanark in a phenomenological sense; her slap indicates that she refuses to recognise him as a living consciousness.

Lanark's cold mistrust of cognitive relations therefore intensifies as his feelings deaden further:

After a time the dense freezing fog and his arctic brain and body blended. He moved along street after street in them, a numb kernel of soul kept going by feet somewhere underneath. The only thing he felt very conscious of was his itching right arm. (L 37-38)

This arm becomes the centre of fantasies which coldly objectify the clientele of the Elite:

He imagined entering the Elite and walking across to the Sludden clique with the hand inside the bosom of his jacket. He would smile at them with one side of his mouth then expose the

hand suddenly. As Sludden, Toal and McPake leapt to their feet he would knock them down with a sweeping sideways blow, then drive the squealing girls into a corner and rake the clothes off them. [...] After these dreams he would become dismally cold and depressed. (L 41-42)

Lanark's betrayal by Rima pushes him towards a desperate fear of the failure of love.

It seems to him inevitable that he will receive only those recognitive responses which attribute to him inauthentic motives:

Lanark stood up, feeling terribly afraid. A short while ago he had told Sludden he was content. Now everything he heard or saw or remembered was pushing him toward panic. He desperately wanted Rima beside him, a Rima who would smile and be sad with him, a Rima whose fears he could soothe and who would not fling words at him like stones. (L 39)

These memories of fulfilling, creative interaction with Rima are too weak to reverse the spread of his dragonhide:

if he was all like that he would have no feeling at all, so he thought of Rima and her moments of kindness: the time in the truck when she touched him and said she was sorry, the dance and how they held each other, the moment in the fog when she laughed at him and slid her hand round his arm, the coffee she had made and even the jacket she had flung. But these memories were too feeble to restore human feeling. (L 42)

Of course, Rima's strategy rebounds on herself. Without trusted loved ones to recognise her authentically, she has even less faith in the potential of social interaction. Her dragonhide spreads until it creates the Rima met by Lanark in the Institute. She attempts again to drive Lanark away:

A wave of terror passed over him in which he struggled to get up, then a wave of rage in which he sat, leaned forward and whispered, "You have no right to despise my bad actions without liking my better ones."

"Tell me about these, were they many? Were they pretty?"

He cried, "Dr. Lanark is ready to leave!" (L 74)

Rima, however, is dealing with a different Lanark: ““Goodbye!” he said with a conscious cruelty which startled him. He stared down at the clenching and unclenching hand for a while, then asked humbly, “Are you very sore?”” (L 75). It is his own escape from the vicious circle of dragonhide which enables Lanark to cure Rima. He advances an enormous amount of trust in her when she seems on the brink of turning salamander:

[Rima:] “[...] I’ll kill you.”
 “I don’t care.”
 “I don’t want to kill you.” (L 94)

This refusal to kill Lanark translates as a refusal to kill phenomenologically this other who asks for her trust.

Nevertheless, despite their reconciliation in the Institute, Lanark’s relationship with Rima eventually collapses when they reach Unthank. Instead of allowing Rima to bring him to consciousness of his own unpredictable selfhood, Lanark employs her as the mirror to his self-conceit. She tells him:

“You dragged us here from a perfectly comfortable place because you disliked the food, and what good did it do? We still eat the same food. You laughed when I gave you a son and you can’t even give him a home. You use use use me all the time, and you’re so smugly sure you’re right all the time.” (L 430)

He has depersonalised her: ‘*No matter how bad things get you will always plod on without caring what other people think or feel*’ (L 456); and, accordingly, she petrifies him in response: ‘He went to the entrance and turned, hoping for a look of

friendship or recognition, but her face was so full of stony pain that he could only shake his head' (L 430). It is her final refusal to care for an uncaring man that prompts Rima's separation from Lanark.

Lanark responds with his own self-petrification:

[Rima:] "Sludden and I often discuss you, and he thinks you would be a very valuable man if you knew how to release your emotions."

He lay rigid, clenching his fists and teeth in order not to scream. (L 457)

Lanark represses his feelings rather than engage emotionally with Rima. It is this insulation from recognitive social interaction which Sludden exploits: "What Rima and I admire in you is your instinctive self-control. That makes you a very, very valuable man" (L 459). The request that he be a delegate to the general assembly therefore plays upon his fantasies of celebrity: 'An intoxicating excitement began to fill him and he frowned to hide it. He saw himself on a platform, or maybe a pedestal, casting awe over a vast assembly with a few simple, forceful words about truth, justice and brotherhood' (L 460). Lanark's repetrification therefore intensifies: he reflects, "leaders need to be mostly dead. People want solid monuments to cling to, not confused men like themselves. Sludden was wise to send me. *I can never melt*" (L 508). The symbolic mirror of monadic self-contemplation therefore appears:

There was a mirror above the blocked lavatory sink; a medicine cabinet with a mirror for a door hung on the wall facing it. By moving the door to an angle he managed to see himself in profile. Jack had removed the beard and trimmed the moustache. His greying hair, receding from the brow, swept into a bush behind the ears: the effect was impressive and statesmanlike. (L 461)

This 'excited love of his own importance as a provost and delegate' (L 461) severs his relationship with Sandy, a bond which he briefly understands to be 'the realest thing in the world' (L 467). Lanark therefore succumbs again to petrification, such is his mistrust of cognitive relations.

We can therefore see that Gray's work does not merely translate Laing's concepts of hypnotic misattribution, and guilt over authenticity. Gray also employs Laing's account of the mechanisms by which threatening attributions are nullified. Whenever one of Gray's characters finds it necessary to depersonalise others because of their troublesome cognitive responses, we encounter the imagery of petrification.

Hysteria as Communication

The relevance of Laing's psychoanalysis to Gray's fiction does not end, however, with the concept of depersonalisation. Thaw's asthma should be understood as a consequence of the insulation from recognitive relations brought about by his transcendental kinship. I employ both classical Freudian psychoanalysis and the more recent interpersonal tradition – of which Laing is a prominent exponent – as a hermeneutic guide to Gray's depiction of Thaw's illness.

In their classic psychoanalytic study of hysteria, Freud and his early colleague, Joseph Breuer, argue against an unproblematic distinction between impressions and ideas in terms of phenomenological vivacity:

The fading of a memory or the losing of its affect depends on various factors. The most important of these is *whether there has been an energetic reaction to the event that provokes an affect*. By 'reaction' we here understand the whole class of voluntary and involuntary reflexes – from tears to acts of revenge – in which, as experience shows us, the affects are discharged. If this reaction takes place to a sufficient amount a large part of the affect disappears as a result. [...] If the reaction is suppressed, the affect remains attached to the memory.³⁹

Mnemic ideas acquire their reduced forcefulness only in the expression of whatever passion accompanies their initial impression; thus, 'If there is no such reaction, whether in deeds or words, or in the mildest cases in tears, any recollection of the event retains its affective tone to begin with.'⁴⁰

³⁹ Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer, 'On the Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena: Preliminary Communication', in *Studies on Hysteria*, ed. by Angela Richards, trans. by James and Alix Strachey, The Pelican Freud Library, 3 (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1974), pp.53-72 (pp.58-59).

⁴⁰ Freud and Breuer, p.59.

In hysteria, ideas without energetic reaction undergo a peculiar transformation:

the memories which have become the determinants of hysterical phenomena persist for a long time with astonishing freshness and with the whole of their affective colouring. We must, however, mention another remarkable fact, [...] namely, that these memories unlike other memories of their past lives, are not at the patients' disposal. On the contrary, *these experiences are completely absent from the patients' memory when they are in a normal psychical state, or are only present in a highly summary form.*⁴¹

In the course of everyday life, there arise events which would normally recall the traumatic event behind the hysteria. However, where the memory remains repressed and without reaction, such reminders act as triggers for a hysterical response. Breuer gives an example of this process of subconscious recall:

A girl of seventeen had her first hysterical attack [...] when a cat jumped on her shoulder in the dark. [...] Closer investigation showed, however, that the girl, who was particularly good-looking, and was not properly looked after, had recently had a number of more or less brutal attempts made on her, and had herself been sexually excited by them. [...] A few days before, a young man had attacked her on the same dark staircase and she had escaped from him with difficulty. This was the actual psychical trauma, which the cat did no more than make manifest.⁴²

Hysterical symptoms arise, therefore, when the subject attempts to express a reaction appropriate to the repressed, vivid, idea. However, what is expressed is merely an abnormally activated reflex which in some way stands for the inhibited passion but

⁴¹ Freud and Breuer, p.60.

⁴² Joseph Breuer, 'Theoretical', in *Studies on Hysteria*, ed. by Angela Richards, trans. by James and Alix Strachey, The Pelican Freud Library, 3 (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1974), pp.259-333 (p.290).

which is not, in itself, an effective reaction: 'The excitation arising from the affective idea is 'converted' (Freud) into a somatic phenomenon.'⁴³

This model should be borne in mind as we explore the way in which psychoanalysis has been re-interpreted in terms of a recognitive paradigm. Laing discusses the way in which social circumstances may render certain emotional reactions impossible. He firstly reminds us that the personal experience of an event may greatly differ from that which would be conventionally attributed. For example,

Jill's mother had a stroke in 1963. She recovered to live on, nursed by Jill, until she died two years later. Jill said her mother had died in 1963. She did not recognize her mother in the woman she nursed for two years. When her mother 'officially' died in 1965, she felt relief not grief.

Thus official dates of public events can be out of phase with the structure of experience.⁴⁴

When the subject dissents from conventional attributions, others may simply refuse to recognise his or her feelings: 'Call experiential structure A, and public event B' – 'to preserve convention, there is a general collusion to disavow A when A and B do not match. Anyone breaking this rule is liable to invalidation.'⁴⁵ Typically, this leads the subject to transform his or her experience so that these unconventional feelings are excluded from awareness: 'If our wishes, feelings, desires, hopes, fears, perception, imagination, memory, dreams ... do not correspond to the law, they are outlawed, and excommunicated. Outlawed and excommunicated, they do not cease to exist. But they do undergo secondary transformations.'⁴⁶ This process of excommunication is

⁴³ Breuer, p.282.

⁴⁴ Laing, 'Politics of the Family', p.68.

⁴⁵ Laing, 'Politics of the Family', p.68.

⁴⁶ Laing, 'Politics of the Family', p.74

effected by defence mechanisms: 'We could never succeed unless we were able to employ a further set of operations on our experience to some of which I have already alluded. Most of these are described in psychoanalysis as 'defence mechanisms'.'⁴⁷ For Laing, unrecognised feelings are quelled by defence mechanisms which expel such emotions from conscious access and, at the same time, transform them into psychopathological symptoms.

Laing's analysis is part of a general re-interpretation of psychoanalysis in terms of communication. Thomas Szasz advances a communicative theory, and makes reference to one of Laing's Scottish precursors, the psychoanalyst W.R.D. Fairbairn:

Fairbairn (1952) has been one of the most successful exponents of a consistently psychological formulation of so-called psychiatric problems. Emphasizing that psychoanalysis deals, above all else, with observations of, and statements about, object relationships^[48] he has reformulated much of psychoanalytic theory from the vantage point of this ego-psychological (and by implication, communicational) approach. In his paper, "Observations on the Nature of Hysterical States" (1954), he wrote:

Hysterical conversion is, of course, a defensive technique – one designed to prevent the conscious emergence of emotional conflicts involving object-relationships. Its essential and distinctive feature *is the substitution of a bodily state for a personal problem*; and this substitution enables the personal problem as such to be ignored (p.117).

I am in agreement with this simple yet precise statement. According to this view, the distinctive phenomenal feature of hysteria is the substitution of a "bodily state" (Fairbairn) for communications by means of ordinary language concerning personal problems. As a result of this transformation ("translation") both the content and the form of the discourse change. The content changes from personal problems to bodily problems, while the form changes from verbal (linguistic) language to bodily (gestural) language.

Accordingly, hysterical conversion is best regarded as a process of translation – a conception first proposed by Freud.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Laing, 'Politics of the Family', p.95.

⁴⁸ 'Object-relationships' is a rather confusing piece of psycho-analytic jargon. Despite its connotations, it means 'personal relationships'.

⁴⁹ Thomas S. Szasz, *The Myth of Mental Illness: Foundations of a Theory of Personal Conduct* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1962), pp.90-91.

The symptom is merely a way of expressing – while disavowing – an unrecognised emotion:

Translation from what could be, or had been, ordinary language into protolanguage [...] makes communication concerning a significant subject possible, while at the same time it helps the speaker disown the disturbing implications of his message. The specific choice of body signs is generally determined by the unique personal-historical and social circumstances of the sufferer, in accordance with the principles discovered by Freud.⁵⁰

Our attention should be directed to a further consideration. Childhood sexuality is one of the emotions most likely to be invalidated and excommunicated. It is appropriate at this point to refer to Malinowski's comments on one of Freud's later discoveries – namely, the childhood 'latency period':

In modern Europe, according to Freud, there sets in at this age a very curious phenomenon: the regression of sexuality, a period of latency, a lull in the development of sexual functions and impulses. What makes this latency period especially important in the Freudian scheme of neuroses is the amnesia which is associated with it, the curtain of complete oblivion which falls at this period and which obliterates the reminiscences of infantile sexuality. Remarkably enough, this important and interesting contention of Freud's is not endorsed by other students. For instance, Moll, in his memoir on infantile sexuality (a very thorough and competent contribution), makes no mention of any lull in sexual development.⁵¹

Anthropology demonstrates that this latency is culturally specific; it is almost non-existent outside of the Western European middle-class:

while the early childish interest in the indecent awakens earlier and in another form in the peasant and proletarian child, it is less clandestine, less associated with guilt, hence less immoral, less 'anal-erotic' and more attached to sex. It passes more easily and with more continuity into early sexual play, and the period of latency is almost completely absent or, at any rate, much less pronounced. This explains why psycho-analysis, which deals with

⁵⁰ Szasz, pp.123-24.

⁵¹ Bronislaw Malinowski, *Sex and Repression in Savage Society* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1927), pp.49-50.

neurotic well-to-do people, has led to the discovery of this period, while the general medical observations of Dr. Moll did not detect it.⁵²

The sexual latency of the middle-class child is, therefore, culturally created by the absence of parental acknowledgement of child sexuality: 'Those who remember from their own childhood how strongly such a repressive atmosphere of hints and sous-entendus is felt and how well its meaning is understood by the child, recognize that the category of 'indecent' is created by its elders.'⁵³

Let us now use the insights of Laing, Fairbairn, Szasz, and Malinowski to reinterpret the Freudian account of hysteria. Malinowski's analysis allows us to make a recognitive interpretation of Freud and Breuer's first class of reaction inhibiting conditions:

In the first group are those cases in which the patients have not reacted to a psychical trauma because the nature of the trauma excluded a reaction, as in the case of the apparently irreparable loss of a loved person or because social circumstances made a reaction impossible or because it was a question of things which the patient wished to forget, and therefore intentionally repressed from his conscious thoughts and inhibited and suppressed.⁵⁴

Just as certain kinds of suffering may be unacknowledged within a culture or a particular upbringing, so the passions of child sexuality go generally unrecognised within the modern Western European middle-class. We therefore find a plausibly recognitive example of hysteria in Breuer's analysis of a boy who 'refused food and vomited when it was pressed on him'.⁵⁵ Breuer uncovers the boy's trauma:

⁵² Malinowski, *Sex and Repression*, p.54.

⁵³ Malinowski, *Sex and Repression*, p.52.

⁵⁴ Freud and Breuer, p.61.

⁵⁵ Breuer, p.289.

he burst into tears and told the following story. While on his way home from school he had gone into a urinal, and a man had held out his penis to him and asked him to take it into his mouth. He had run away in terror, and nothing else had happened to him. But he was ill from that instant. As soon as he had made his confession he recovered completely. [...] The illness owed its persistence to the boy's silence, which prevented the excitation from finding its normal outlet.⁵⁶

The offer of food, Breuer would say, was enough to trigger the boy's hysteria by its associative effect on the energetic repressed memory; the somatic conversion substitutes for the inhibited reaction of disgust which the boy cannot express to his parents. Breuer's therapy – in a recognitive interpretation – works by acknowledging the boy's specifically erotic revulsion at his experience. To show distress about this incident with the molester would have been for the boy to make the admission that he understood the sexual meaning of the man's intentions – that, in being offered a penis, it was rather different from being offered, for example, a finger. As a child, however, the boy is, conventionally, not supposed to have an understanding of genital pleasure. The symptom therefore indicates a disgust which cannot be spoken because it is a revulsion at a sexual advance; the boy's erotic being has been denied by others and so he cannot know his own distress. Significantly, his suffering can only be expressed before others – and himself – in its compulsive and de-eroticised conversion to anorexia and nausea. Thus, in the theory of hysteria which is a corollary to the interpersonal theory of the psyche, the patient is unconscious of his or her own trauma because of the conventional attributions which invalidate his or her own experience.

⁵⁶ Breuer, p.289.

Let us, then, return to the attribution of original sin with which Thaw's parents invalidate his spontaneous inclinations: 'they one day undressed the furiously kicking boy, filled a bath with cold water and plunged him in. The sudden chilling scald destroyed all his protest, and this treatment was used on later occasions with equal success' (L 123-24). The enduring significance of these experiences becomes clear when we attend to the symbolism which appears alongside Thaw's unrecognised passions. Before his traumatic childhood evacuation and the first incidence of his asthma, we find water imagery: 'the sparkling grey sea was too vivid for him to disbelieve. It fought in his head with a picture of farms and fields until it seemed to be flooding them' (L 131). Also, after his mother's death, Thaw is drawn towards water: 'Thaw switched off the wireless and went for a walk to the canal. He stood at the edge of a deep stone channel and watched without thought or feeling the foam-flecked water swirl between rotting timbers' (L 198). Thus, when his feelings remain unacknowledged and repressed, the motif of water often appears:

A sad kind of shock flowed through Thaw like water. He sat still, not saying much, then went to the counter and brought food back to the table. Drummond left and MacBeth sat in a way which told Thaw he was depressed at not being asked to the party. MacBeth said, "You're quiet tonight, Duncan."

"I'm sorry. I was thinking."

"I suppose you've been asked to Kenneth's party tomorrow?"

"No." (L 250)

This water imagery clearly relates to Thaw's childhood trauma. Indeed, at the height of his suppressed anger after breaking up with Marjory, the cold-bath treatment returns:

[Thaw:] "Fill bath. Cold water."

With difficulty he explained that maybe (like a land forgetting inner differences when attacked by another) the clenched air tubes might relax if his whole skin was insulted by cold water. (L 297)

Thaw's asthma is a somatic species of this cold-bath imagery. This is apparent in his inauthentically good-natured break-up with Marjory. Duncan does not have self-confidence enough to feel his unrecognised resentment of Marjory's refusal to model for him: 'Her smile was so direct and bright that his face had to reflect it' (L 290). It is only when he has left her hypnotic presence, that he feels his own anger:

Their parting had been so kind that for three minutes he was almost happy, but as time and space widened between them resentment developed. Along Sauchiehall Street the glances of passers-by made him notice he was chanting aloud, "If you exist let me kill her, if you exist let me kill her." (L 291-92)

But without Marjory to validate his passion, it converts into self-asphyxiation:

He lay like a corpse, his brain rotten with resentful dreams. He tortured her in sexual fantasies, and revised and enlarged the farewell speeches he had failed to make when parting, and minutely remembered and resented every moment they had passed together. He wondered why his thoughts were so full of a girl who had given him so little. The aching emotions gradually became muscular tightness, his limited movement a way of saving breath. (L 293)

The relation between Thaw's asthma and his unrecognised emotions is confirmed by the conditions which alleviate it. After a spell of psychotherapy and hospitalisation, he becomes able to feel love for everyday others: 'the sister's face looked keen and fiftyish. She said, "Poor McDade! God help him!" on a low note of such stern pity that warmth gushed in Thaw's chest and he gazed at her lovingly' (L 303). This conscious affect eases his asthma; the next day, 'he awoke in sunlight breathing easily amid the bright clangour of washbasins being passed round' (L 304).

Furthermore, after his return from hospital, he is able to become conscious of his grief at his mother's death:

He thought, 'Oh no! No!' and felt for the only time in his life a pang of pure sorrow without rage or self-pity in it. He could not weep, but a berg of frozen tears floated near his surface, and he knew that berg floated in everyone, and wondered if they felt it as seldom as he did. (L 316)

This also further eases his condition: 'He fell asleep [...] and woke an hour later feeling so fit that he flung the syringe and adrenalin into the rubbish bin' (L 316).

Thaw, however, will die because of a mistaken attempt to cure his asthma. The water motif returns as he wanders in the Highlands: 'He feels sticky and sweating, his heart hammers and he thinks, I need a bath' (L 354). This compulsion besets Thaw because of an unfortunate development in medical technology – 'cortisone steroids, a new drug which healed the asthma in two days' (L 350). This treatment alleviates purely at a bodily level his psychosomatic illness. Now the asphyxiation found in asthma can only be activated by external stimulus: 'He wallows under, gasping and tumbling over and over in salt sting, knowing nothing but the need not to breathe' (L 354). Such normal activation is, of course, liable to be lethal; and so 'when at last, like fingernails losing clutch on too narrow a ledge, he, tumbling, yells out last dregs of breath and has to breathe, there flows in upon him, not pain, but annihilating sweetness' (L 354). This is, as the oracle puts it, how Thaw 'botched his end' (L 219) so that 'it set no example, not even a bad one' (L 219); he dies because of a compulsion to express the hysterical reaction suppressed by his new medication.

The alleviation of Thaw's asthma therefore destroys the only way he has to symbolise his unconscious emotions. It is the final stage in the destruction of his own

self-conscious being. This process began with his adaptation by transcendental kinship to his loss of trust in his parents. His fantastic insulation from the potential to learn about himself through others merely intensified the repression of his sexuality, love, anger, and grief. For Gray then, as for Friel, transcendental kinship is no solution to the absence of fulfilling relations with trusted others. Indeed, it is certain to further damage the psyche of the alienated individual.

Recognition and Authenticity

I have concentrated so far upon the harmful consequences which ensue upon isolation from recognitive relations. This, of course, implies an obverse side to the significance of recognition in Alasdair Gray's work: namely, the importance of social interaction for personal authenticity. This counterpart to Gray's depiction of pathological relations is most fully developed in 1982 *Janine*. We see, in the character of Jock McLeish, how an authentic relation to self is, for Gray, established only through interaction with others.

Let us begin by noting that Jock shares with Thaw a similar sense of guilt over his spontaneous inclinations. His acceptance of his putative original sin is particularly clear with regard to his own sexuality:

one day I noticed a new girl who seemed to actively hate me. She was small and chubby with a moony petulant face which she turned away while serving me, and when I handed her the money she took it with a disdain which suggested I was the filthiest man in the world. I found this upsetting because I had been perfectly polite. Next day when I approached the hatch one of the other women called out, "Denny! Here's Jock." She served me in exactly the same way, except that this time she refused to take my money at all but scurried sideways and started serving someone else. (J 204)

Jock is unable to correctly interpret Denny's response because of a premise which he holds about female sexuality – namely, that such a term is an oxymoron:

I had never, never, never believed that a woman could desire a man. The universal habit of marriage showed that they needed men, but folk often need what they don't want and want what they don't need. My sexual daydreams were full of capture and bondage because I could imagine no other way of keeping a woman I wanted. (J 205)

Thus, he misunderstands Denny's shyness as revulsion; and he takes the generous token of her favour as the 'disdain' due to one who must seem, because of his sexual desire, 'the filthiest man in the world.'

Jock is only able to gradually overcome this potentially self-confirming conviction of his own sinfulness because of Denny's courage. She tests out the uncertain terrain posed by this neatly-dressed youth who continually refuses her generosity:

I laid the coins on the counter and went away feeling puzzled. She served me the third day with the same averted face, placing the food on my plate more slowly. Before passing it to me, with the fearful look of someone forcing herself to jump across a dangerous gap, she bit her lip, hesitated and whispered, "Rotten weather."
I said, "Yes it is," and held out the money. (J 204)

Despite Jock's minimal response, she persists; and the metaphor of a jump recurs:

when one day Denny whispered, in her fearful jumping-over-a-precipice voice, "What do you do in the evenings?", I said, "Will you meet me tonight?"
She nodded and said, "Mhm."
I said, "What about seven o'clock at the front entrance?"
She said, "Aye, all right." (J 206)

Denny, unlike Jock, can take a leap into the uncertain. She cannot be sure whether *his* reaction is disdainful, or merely unperceptive; but she accepts this uncertainty, and acts in order to see what response she brings forth.

Jock's relationship with Denny does not only alleviate his guilt over his sexuality, it also begins to bring him to knowledge of his desire for Denny herself. At first, he does not see that Denny's actions reflect his own desire for her:

The other serving ladies smiled at each other and I left the hatch feeling I had been made to look foolish. I now knew that I attracted her, but she did not attract me. My notions of female attraction were based on Jane Russell and various fashion photographs. I was ignorant. (J 205)

Nevertheless, he is soon confronted with a vertiginous perspective into the uncertainty of his own self: 'Walking back to Hillhead that evening I began to feel different. It occurred to me that Denny might let me do anything I wanted with her and the thought made me dizzy' (J 205). With this nascent self-knowledge, Jock begins no longer to believe that his imaginative life portrays accurately his authentic aspirations: 'Denny had no place in the world of my imagination yet I found myself walking faster till I was almost running, and when I reached the lodgings I had decided that next day I would ask her out' (J 205). His desires begin to be informed by authentic longing: 'I could not forget the smooth comforting warmth of her body when I had wakened with her. I lay awake at night, wanting it again' (J 209). Beyond Jock's fantasies, there is an unspoken, unconceived, unimagined need:

I was embarrassed by the first continuous erection I ever experienced. It happened suddenly and would not go away. It made walking difficult and I could not stop it. I was not thinking lustfully of Denny or anyone else when this happened, I was not thinking at all, I was stupefied to find that my body had a memory and will of which my mind knew nothing. (J 210)

Consequently, Jock's longing for glamorous women starts to fade: 'I lay at night in bed haunted by imaginings which seemed thin and futile. I could no longer take Jane Russell seriously' (J 206). It is this delusive, monadically informed certainty which Jock nurtured during his adolescent evenings of study: 'I was sure that one day I would do anything in the world I wanted. I thought it likely that I would marry Jane Russell' (J 19-20).

It is, of course, Jock's return to the solitary and contemplative values of his imagination which leads him into his affair with Helen and all its unpleasant consequences. Jock hides from the knowledge of his subsequent misery by manipulating the recognitive responses of others. This capacity is first apparent in the narrative when, after leaving Denny, he misrepresents himself to his landlady, and uses her response to bolster his belief that he is purely the victim of Denny's infidelity:

In a low, monotonous voice I said that I had gone to live with friends who were not as I had thought. I had the previous evening discovered them engaged in an activity which, though not criminal, was of a sort I would not insult her ears by describing. While saying this I almost believed I was an innocent country lad appalled by the corruption of the big city. The respectable lady softened at once. (J 293)

The adult Jock, then, is able to hide – like Mr Alfred – from the potential recognition that he is an alcoholic:

When I'm at home at the weekend I make a practice of pubcrawling. I spread my drinking between about twenty pubs, visiting six or seven in a single night but never the same pubs two nights running. In this way nobody gets to know me thoroughly or notices how much I drink. (J 161)

As Jock reflects: 'If I stop travelling and stay in one place I will become a recognisable, pitiable ("Out of pity for your condition I will take no action") despicable drunkard.' (J 176); the alteration in question, of course, would be purely epistemic – Jock is already a pitiable, despicable drunkard.

It is Jock's eventual encounter with the boy in the grocers which begins to bring about self-consciousness through recognition:

The boy took the stolen groceries from my pocket, laid them on the counter and said quietly, "Out of respect for your age and pity for your condition I am taking no steps in this matter. But if I find you doing this again I will inform the police." (J 173)

After the crisis of despair precipitated by this response, Jock rediscovers his own misery:

Ach tears

Ach

Ach

Ach

Ach floods of them (J 337-38).

The meaning of this affect becomes clear when we recall Jock's assertion that 'since the age of thirteen I have not shed a single tear' (J 57). Significantly, it was Mad Hislop who marked the absence of conscious suffering: 'I suppose Hislop produced the man he wanted for I have not wept from that day to this' (J 85). Jock's shame at his pity for others and himself was engendered when he was beaten by Hislop for looking on the latter with sorrow:

"How dare you look at me in that condescending fashion? I will have no favourites in this class. Hold out your hands, and double them."

I did so in a daze of astonishment. Did I cry out at the first blow? Almost certainly, but afterward I did not flinch and certainly did not weep. I was so full of icy hatred that I probably forgot I had hands. Yet, when he stopped I did not lower them, I glared at him with a rigid grin I can feel on my face at this very moment, and I stepped toward him and raised my hands till they almost touched his chin and I whispered, "Again!" (J 85)

Jock's eventual tears therefore show that he has thrown off the attribution of original sin to his compassion. He can now reconcile with his manhood the elements of his personality which he excommunicated in order to retain kinship with his community.

Once freed from his persistent guilt, Jock comes to understand that he has merely been beaten into the efficient form demanded by the socio-economic system. He became exactly what he was supposed to be, no matter how inauthentic this was for him:

For more than twenty-five years before these minutes I was a character in a script written by National Security. That script governed my main movements, and therefore my emotions. How could I learn to love my wife when for half the week I never even slept with her? I made myself completely predictable so that the firm could predict me. I stopped growing, stopped changing. (J 333)

Thus, when Jock refuses the attribution of original sin, he also rediscovers the uncertainty of his own selfhood: 'I am not predictable now' (J 333), he declares; 'Will I discover that I am a homosexual, a cool-eyed gambler, a carver of clock cases, a psychopathic killer?' (J 334). This future is so markedly uncertain because it can only be discovered recognitively. Without social action, Jock is a mystery even to himself: 'Nobody will guess what I am going to do. I do not know it myself. But I will not do nothing' (J 341).

Conclusion

Let us now summarise this analysis of *Lanark*, *1982 Janine*, and *The Fall of Kelvin Walker*. Characters such as Duncan Thaw, Jock McLeish and Kelvin Walker share in a sense of guilt over their spontaneous inclinations. This phenomenon shows the influence upon Gray of Laing's account of the hypnotic attributions which can occur within the context of the family. Because of their sense of original sin, Jock McLeish and Kelvin Walker believe in a fate which will punish them for their autonomous inclinations. Thaw, however, establishes – via an enduring psychological regression – a fantastic relationship to a superior, personal deity, who can shield him from the guilt associated with his authentic needs. By an intensification of his imaginative life, Thaw maintains his sense of a divine kinship shielding him from the original sin of spontaneity. His compensatory religion is, however, vulnerable to misfortune – even everyday bad luck signals his alienation from the goddess. Accordingly, his sexual life becomes the pursuit of erotic communion with her avatar. This perversion of his sexuality – apparent in his relationships with Kate Caldwell, Molly Tierney, and Marjory Laidlaw – means that Thaw loses interest in those properly cognitive relations which might reveal to him such repressed feelings as his grief and mundane sexual desire. This depersonalisation of others is fantastically literalised in the dragonhide which afflicts Lanark in the Third Book. This condition, and the other diseases, are best understood in terms of Laing's cognitive psychoanalytic theory. Indeed, the story of Thaw also picks up on Laing's reworking of psychoanalysis: it presents excommunication of authentic feeling as the explanation for both Thaw's hysterical asthma and his eventual death by drowning. In order to understand how one

might resist the attribution of guilt to authentic being – without recourse to transcendental kinship and its attendant pathologies – we must turn to the character of Jock McLeish. In *1982 Janine*, we learn that authenticity is achieved only by brave recognitive leaps which defy the economically efficient, but wholly unwarranted, existential security of those who acquiesce to their original sin.

FOUR

TRANSCENDENTAL KINSHIP AND NOVELISTIC REPRESENTATION IN THE WORK OF GEORGE FRIEL AND ALASDAIR GRAY

Introduction

I have shown that both Friel and Gray depict transcendental kinship as an ultimately futile attempt to live outside of everyday recognitive relations. I have examined the character interaction, the imagery, and the allusions of their texts in order to reveal this common theme. It is less apparent, though, that, for Friel and Gray, the novelistic story and its narration are also, in their form and structure, an invitation to transcendental kinship.

Friel presents the novelistic story as complicit with Christian notions of providence. Even a novel critical of Calvinism – such as *Grace and Miss Partridge* – may nevertheless be allied with the fatalism found in transcendental kinship. Friel foregrounds this novelistic convention by employing an unreliable narrator who can be seen to twist the fictional events of *Grace and Miss Partridge* into a properly novelistic story. This providential structure means that the novelistic plot is a literary species of a more general artistic phenomenon: in *Mr Alfred, M.A.*, artistic representation is depicted as a means by which to strengthen an analogy between the everyday world and the products of the imagination. This analogy is a way in which

individuals isolated from everyday recognition may acquire a sense of transcendental community.

Gray's work also depicts the novel as complicit with transcendental kinship. Unlike Friel, however, Gray is more concerned with the significance of literary narration. The freedom of the narrator to arrange the manifold events of the story encourages the reader to regard time as unreal. The narrator's communication with the reader therefore initiates the latter into a literary community for whom narrative representation is a liberation from the misery of chronologically ordered experience. Gray's presentation of Jock McLeish, *Lanark*, and the Oracle, explores and desublimates this doctrine. His own work is prevented from colluding with this literary soteriology by the use of innovative formal devices.

My interpretation of the work of Friel and Gray will require two strands of theoretical argument. The first is an exposition and synthesis of the metaphysical concepts which lead towards the Kantian doctrine that the phenomenal world is an illusion built upon a higher, non-spatial, non-temporal reality. My second line of argument will relate certain narratological techniques to this philosophical doctrine.

Transcendental Kinship and the Novelistic Plot in the Work of George Friel

Friel shows that the conventional novelistic plot follows an essentially providential structure. Even as the narrator of *Grace and Miss Partridge* mocks the Calvinist beliefs of his culture, he tells a story based around a secularised redemption through accidental causation. This structure becomes apparent when McKay's mother questions his account of the events in the tenement. The reader discovers that McKay has twisted his story in order to find the putative essential meaning behind the coincidences which interfere with the intentions of his characters. Friel's emphasis of the artificiality of this plot structure prevents the reader from regarding it as an accurate empirical observation. To do so would be to assent in the belief that some transcendent fate, and not everyday recognitive relations, leads one to an authentic way of life.

A similar, though more general, relation between transcendental kinship and artistic representation is also apparent in *Mr. Alfred, M.A.*. There we encounter a vocabulary which alludes to the Kantian doctrine of a higher noumenal world from which the individuating media of time and space are absent. The everyday, phenomenal world, in Kant's philosophy, is constructed by the synthetic activity of the imagination upon the atomistic elements of being. Mr Alfred therefore finds solace in the hope that his imagination will eventually re-assert itself over the nightmarish fantasy which passes for his everyday life. Martha and Graeme are also comforted by

the Kantian doctrine and, furthermore, believe that despite their lack of sexual communion, they are united in a de-individuated noumenal existence.

Let us begin with Friel's presentation of the role played by accidental causation within the conventional novel. McKay, the narrator of *Grace and Miss Partridge*, finds occasion to satirise the belief that seemingly chance events are predestined by a divine agent:

Mrs Stockwell was something of a Calvinist in the slant of her mind. 'If it's for ye it'll no gang past ye, that's what I aye say,' was her regular contribution of sympathy if anyone dared mention to her the misfortune of a neighbour, the sudden death of a husband, a diagnosis of cancer in a young mother, or the death of a child by drowning in the Canal round the corner. (GP 22)

Sympathy, it seems, would be reserved only for truly undeserved misfortune – but this, if one believes in an almighty God, is a contradiction in terms. McKay's criticism is, however, merely part of the material of his narrative; in its formal aspect, his story is structured according to a belief in the meaningfulness of co-incidence. This is readily apparent in his presentation of an order behind the dual contingencies which redeem Miss Partridge and save Grace from poisoning. Similar phrases join the consecutively presented elements of the converging subplots. We see, for example, a 'connection' between Grace at school and Miss Partridge at work:

[Miss Galloway:] 'Every time I want to start new sums half the class is late. I'll let you off. You're just the first of many.'

The first of many things Wee Annie had to do was check the wages envelopes and then write out fair on a slip what she wanted from the bank. (GP 164)

To take another example, there is a 'link' between the gang and Miss Partridge:

'Hellsbells,' Tiger chewed his pinkie. 'It's high bloody time we wis there.'

'It's high time you were away.'

Mr Alan's bald head gleamed genially round the door of Wee Annie's cubbyhole. (GP 165)

This weaving together of unrelated causal chains into a providential whole is foregrounded by evidence of McKay's unreliability as a narrator. The final chapter reveals the previously neutral narratorial voice to be a definite person engaged in a dialogue:

It's very hard to know where to begin now I've come to the end. That must be the end because there's nothing much more I know.

'I don't see how you could even know as much as that,' my mother objected. (GP 181)

McKay's mother attacks her son's claim to genuine knowledge of the events which inspired his novel. Even where he is employing testimony, she argues, it may be quite unreliable. This could be due, for example, to corruption through lapses of memory: she declares, "You're writing down what people said, aye, and even what they thought, fifteen years ago or more. It's not possible. You can't know the unknowable" (GP 184). Testimony may also be distorted by transmission, as is possible with McKay's assertion that Dross gave Tiger the idea for the robbery:

'I got it from Tommy Partridge, and Dross told his probation officer, Mr Wylie, and Mr Wylie told me. I did some chasing on all this, you know.'

'Firsthand evidence,' my mother derided. 'Somebody told somebody that told somebody that told you.' (GP 186)

Evidence may also be twisted according to personal bias. As McKay's mother reminds him, he is far from neutral himself: "Miss Partridge," said my mother. "You were jealous of her because she was so fond of Grace, and you were afraid Grace was going to get fond of her" (GP 189). Furthermore, McKay has simply invented connections where he has run out of testimony. His mother challenges him:

'There's things I never knew, and wouldn't have told you even if I did. And there's things you just couldn't know.'

'Well of course I made up the odd bit here and there.' (GP 182)

His narrative, which he would like to characterise as history in disguise, is more fictional than he pretends:

'I never said I made up the half of it,' I corrected her respectfully. 'I never said that at all. What I said was I made up a bit here and there to connect things. Forged a few links.'

'Forged a history,' my mother took up my mischosen words. 'You're in a bit of a muddle, aren't you?' (GP 182)

McKay's account of Donald's death combines all these faults – it is pasted together from half-remembered malicious gossip:

'And how about the way poor Donald Duthie died? You were too young then to understand.'

'There's always talk. There's gossip you hear, and you take in, and when you're older you make sense of it.'

'So gossip is one of your sources for a history-essay?' (GP 186)

The story of Donald's death is indeed unconvincing. Donald's body is found quite far away from the place where McKay locates the prostitutes:

He got up. He must have got up. For he wasn't found there. He was found in the Saltmarket near the High Court, half a mile away. No doubt Jake and Jumbo helped him to his feet and put him on his way. (GP 120)

This 'no doubt' is mere rhetoric, as is McKay's confident assertion that "The silly bugger ast fur it," was all they had to say later, shrugging off the outcome' (GP 119). Who did Jake and Jumbo say this to? Not to McKay, and not to the police either, despite McKay's assumption that the latter were merely being circumspect in their investigation of Donald's death: 'I suppose the police, though too discreet to say so, had it all sorted out. But there were no arrests' (GP 121). We must therefore believe the account given by the newspapers to be at least as plausible as McKay's: 'The official version was that a student out for a stroll in the fresh air after an evening studying had been set on by some irresponsible youths and so severely beaten he had received fatal injuries' (GP 121). Without further evidence, we should conclude that simple bad luck led Donald to be in the same place at the same time as a gang looking for trouble.

McKay, however, would not be one to admit that Donald's death could be so contingent. He will have no properly accidental causation in his narrative: "using my sources, I've still got to mould the material, give it a shape, make it mean something, seize the essential behind the accidental' (GP 184). McKay therefore invents a narrative in which Donald is killed because of his failure to restore interpersonal meaning to his sexuality. A seeming co-incidence brings Donald into contact with the prostitutes:

He was on the brink of giving up. The poison in him seemed to have worked itself out of his system. He fumbled for a route home.

Suddenly the night was torn apart by a squeal, a girl's squeal [...] of sheer abandoned female pleasure. [...] He plunged to the sound like a diver to the depths. (GP 116)

Because of this providential meeting, Donald almost disavows his desire for a purely instinctual sexual gratification:

Two plain chairs in front of a poor fire had a pair of knickers and stockings, a bra and girdle, slung over them, and the whole room was so disorderly he was sorry he had come. He was resigned to being only the shadow of a man if he could just get out. From cowardice he made the great refusal. He turned back to the door, blinking to clear the tears in his eyes. (GP 118)

But he is not, allegedly, quite authentic – he turns away out of fear, and not because of a courageous anagnorisis. Thus, he is killed, McKay tells us, because he still holds to selfish, utilitarian values:

They searched him between them, exploring him, found his oldfashioned pocketbook, a clumsy thing of real leather inside his jacket, took his few pounds away and shoved the pocketbook back where it was. They were agreeable to let it go at that. But not Donald. Oh no, he wanted his money back. His Highland blood was up. The rest no longer mattered, but money always mattered. (GP 119)

Donald is given the opportunity – in McKay's fiction – to renounce his desire for interpersonal relations void of recognitive significance. But, unlike Miss Partridge, he fails this test, and is killed. As Augustine might remind us, 'the violence which assails good men to test them, to cleanse and purify them, effects in the wicked their condemnation, ruin, and annihilation.'¹

McKay's love of fabulation makes a general point about literary fiction. What distinguishes a conventional novelistic fictional narrative from a merely fictional

narrative is the providential structure of the plot. The conventional novelistic plot is structured in such a way as to reveal a relation between co-incidence and the authenticity of the characters. Thus, rather than admit meaningless accidents into his novel, McKay invents a narrative in which Donald's death is a result of his failure to redeem himself. This supplements the already striking, and presumably reliable, account of the co-incidences which allow Miss Partridge to understand her own need for secular kinship.

The foregrounding of novelistic conventions is therefore also an implicit criticism of the form which Friel uses in *The Boy Who Wanted Peace*. In that novel, the least central member of the Brotherhood, Frank Garson, is reunited with his mother through an advert reminiscent of a Malinowskian magical spell:

he remembered the silly advert he had put in the Citizen. He had made up that advert in a mood, much as a man might utter an oath in privacy, and no more than that man had he expected to find his words having any influence on the real world he couldn't escape from. (BP 170)

Indeed, we might think of the advert as more like a prayer – the narrator draws a religious comparison:

The whole thing was a sheer fluke, a pure accident, a fortuitous concatenation of circumstances. That Enrico had happened to use that page to put round the chips and that she happened to see the ad at all, was the kind of coincidence that happens every day in the real world that God created but is condemned as far-fetched in the work of a novelist, as if God wasn't the greatest novelist of all. (BP 128)

¹ Augustine, *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, trans. by Henry Bettenson ([Harmondsworth(?): Pelican, 1972; repr. London: Penguin, 1981), p.14.

If we regard the narrator's remark that God created the real world as an authorial irony, then the implication is clear: the conventional novelist is a minor deity whose fictional realm contains co-incidences arranged in a manner analogous to divine providence. This structure inducts the reader into a make-believe world where accidental causation emanating from a higher reality substitutes for the sense of belonging and authenticity normally supplied by everyday recognitive relations. It is the artifice of this mythic worldview which Friel must foreground lest his audience, by the very act of reading his novels, come to give it implicitly their assent.

It may seem unusual that these religious motifs should persist into a supposedly humanist form such as the novel. Nevertheless, the notion that accidental causation is meaningful is not confined merely to theology – it has also been promulgated by modern philosophy. Schopenhauer, for example, translates the Christian concept of providence into metaphysical concepts. He remarks, without irony, on a relation

between the obvious contingency of all the events in the course of an individual's life and their moral necessity for the shaping thereof in accordance with a transcendent fitness for the individual, or in popular language, between the course of nature and Providence.²

For Schopenhauer, this is a straightforward empirical observation:

If we carefully consider the matter, [...] many [...] will thus be driven to the assumption that a *secret and unintelligible power* guides all the turns and changes of our lives, indeed often contrary to the intentions we had at the time. Yet it does this in such a way as to be appropriate to the objective totality and subjective suitability of our lives and consequently to

² Arthur Schopenhauer, 'Transcendent Speculation on the Apparent Deliberateness in the Fate of the Individual', *Parerga and Paralipomena: Short Philosophical Essays*, trans. by E.F.J. Payne, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974), I, pp.199-223 (p.222).

promote our true and essential welfare. Thus afterwards we often recognise the folly of desires that were entertained in the opposite direction.³

Sceptical readers may note, however, that in order to 'behold the obvious physical contingency of an event and its moral metaphysical necessity'⁴ we should have recourse to literary paradigms:

To get a clear picture of this through a well-known example [...] let us consider Schiller's *Gang nach dem Eisenhammer*. There we see Fridolen's delay through attendance at mass brought about, on the one hand, just as accidentally as, on the other, it is so extremely important and necessary to him.⁵

Indeed, 'If we carefully turn over in our minds many of the scenes of the past, everything therein appears to be as well mapped out as in a really systematically planned novel'.⁶ Schopenhauer assumes that transcendent reality will intervene through accidental causation in order to guide fatefully the individual to his authentic way of life.

The providential form of the novel is therefore employed by Schopenhauer as evidence for his thesis that there is another reality upon which the everyday world is parasitic. It is in this higher reality that seemingly co-incidental events have their proper being as the essential causality of an authentic ethos for the individual. This postulation of an unseen world of greater reality is, we shall see, a consequence of the metaphysical model of 'substance' and 'accident'. This conceptual scheme leads eventually to the conclusion that the everyday world is merely an illusion created by

³ Schopenhauer, p.209.

⁴ Schopenhauer, p.209.

⁵ Schopenhauer, p.209.

⁶ Schopenhauer, p.204n.

the imagination in a manner analogous to that of an artist or painter. Friel's work presents allusions which depict recognitive alienation as the source of this extraordinary doctrine. Just as the form of the novel implies a delusive substitution for recognitive relations, so art in general may be used to encourage a belief that everyday alienation conceals a truer kinship in the noumenal world of de-individuated being.

The notion of substance is made explicit in Aristotle's investigation of the verb 'to be'. He compares the primary and secondary senses of the word 'health' with the use of 'to be':

Everything which is healthy is related to health, one thing in the sense that it preserves health, another in the sense that it produces it, another in the sense that it is a symptom of health, another because it is capable of it. [...] So, too, there are many senses in which a thing is said to be, but all refer to one starting-point; some things are said to be because they are substances, others because they are affections of substance, others because they are a process towards substance [etc.].⁷

A food, an activity, a colour, and so on, may all be said to be 'healthy' in so far as they preserve, produce, or indicate health. These secondary senses have as their focus the primary meaning of health as the well-being of a living thing. Similarly, there are many ways in which a thing may have being – the focus, however, to these various sense is that of substantial being:

While 'being' has all these senses, obviously that which is primarily is the 'what', which indicates the substance of the thing. [...] All other things are said to be because they are, some of them, quantities of that which *is* in this primary sense, others qualities of it, others

⁷ Aristotle, 'Metaphysics', trans. by W.D. Ross, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: the Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. by Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols (Princeton, New Jersey and Guildford, Surrey: Princeton University, 1984), II, pp.1552-1728 (1003a-b).

affections of it, and others some determinations of it. And so one might raise the question whether 'to walk' and 'to be healthy' and 'to sit' signify in each case something that is, and similarly in any other case of this sort; for none of them is either self-subsistent or capable of being separated from substance, but rather, if anything, it is that which walks or is seated or is healthy that is an existent thing. Now these are seen to be more real because there is something definite which underlies them; and this is the substance or individual, which is implied in such a predicate [...]. That which primarily and *is* simply (not *is* something) must be substance.⁸

Bell clarifies this classical account of self-subsistence:

One way to illustrate the force of such pre-theoretical ontological intuitions concerning relations of dependence and independence between entities is to consider certain suppositions of the form: *the universe might have consisted in a single such-and-such*. Many suppositions of this form, though no doubt empirically false are at least intelligible. One can coherently conceive of a so-called 'pocket universe' consisting of nothing but an ashtray, say, or of nothing but two spherical objects of equal mass and equal diameter having equal but opposite angular momentum. But it is unintelligible to suppose that the universe might have consisted of nothing but a size, a similarity, a husband, or a surface. 'You can't *just* have a size,' one wants to say, 'there has to be something of which it *is* the size.' Likewise, for there to be such a thing as a husband there has to be something, a wife, whose husband he is; for a similarity to exist there must exist whatever it is between which the similarity obtains, and so on. [...] Of their very nature certain things, it seems, can only exist in (or between, or in relation to) one or more other things.⁹

De Wulf elucidates the terminology which the schoolmen use for this distinction between primary and secondary being:

The substance or substantial being is the being that exists without needing any other being in which to inhere for its existence, and which serves as subject or support for other realities. Man, horse, house, are substances; whereas the virtue of the virtuous man, the colour of the horse, the size of the house are accidents.¹⁰

⁸ Aristotle, 1028a.

⁹ David Bell, *Husserl* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), p.95.

¹⁰ M. de Wulf, *Scholasticism Old and New: An Introduction to Scholastic Philosophy Medieval and Modern*, trans. by P. Coffey (Dublin and London: Gill and Longmans, [1907?]), §62.

A substance is such an independent being; a thing which may exist without relation to any other things. On the other hand, an accident is a dependent being; a thing which exists only in relation to some other thing.

The category of substance, when applied to the reality of the everyday world, leads to the thesis that space and time are accidental modes of being. Leibniz, inspired by the development of infinitesimal calculus, advances the following argument with regard to the being of space:

1. The monad which we shall discuss here is nothing other than a simple substance that enters into composites. Simple means without parts.
2. And there must be simple substances, since there are composites; for the composite is nothing but an accumulation or *aggregate* of simples.
3. However, where there are no parts at all, no extension or figure or divisibility is possible. And these monads are the true atoms of nature, and, in a word the elements of things.¹¹

Leibniz argues that space is made up of lengthless, shapeless, indivisible parts; in other words, that the substantial reality from which space is derived is, in truth, non-spatial.

His conclusion can be clarified by reference to a similar argument which Augustine presents against the reality of time:

Let us see, then, whether the year that is now current can be present. For if its first month is current, then the rest are future; if the second, the first is already past, and the remainder are not yet. Therefore, the current year is not present all at once. And if it is not present as a whole, then the year is not present. For it takes twelve months to make the year, from which each individual month which is current is itself present one at a time, but the rest are either past or future.¹²

¹¹ G.W. Leibniz, *G.W. Leibniz's Monadology: An Edition for Students*, ed. by Nicholas Rescher (London: Routledge, 1991), §§1-3.

¹² Augustine, 'The Confessions of Saint Augustine', in *Augustine: Confessions and Enchiridion*, trans. by Albert C. Outler, The Library of Christian Classics, 26 vols (London: SCM, 1955), VII, pp.31-333 (11.19).

This year is not the present time; but nor, obviously enough, can the 'now' be a week, day, hour, minute or second – each of these units also admits of division, and therefore cannot be truly present. Augustine therefore concludes that

if any fraction of time can be conceived that cannot now be divided even into the most minute momentary point, this alone is what we may call time present. But this flies so rapidly from future to past that it cannot be extended by any delay. For if it is extended, it is then divided into past and future. But the present has no extension whatever.¹³

What is present temporally for Augustine, and present spatially for Leibniz, is an indivisible point-like part. These monadic elements are the substances which aggregate into the accidental existence of the spatio-temporal world.

If one accepts this argument, then one must also be able to explain how this composition comes about. Time and space, claims Kant, are a phenomenal construction placed upon an atemporal, non-spatial reality:

the things which we intuit are not in themselves what we intuit them as being, nor their relations so constituted in themselves as they appear to us, and that if the subject, or even only the subjective constitution of the senses in general, be removed, the whole constitution and all the relations of objects in space and time, nay space and time themselves would vanish.¹⁴

Kant therefore gives the imagination of the subject the task of unifying the monadic manifold in order to generate spatio-temporal extension:

¹³ Augustine, 'Confessions', 11.20.

¹⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by Norman Kemp Smith (London: MacMillan, 1929), A42.

since every appearance contains a manifold, and since different perceptions therefore occur in the mind separately and singly, a combination of them, such as they cannot have in sense itself, is demanded. There must therefore exist in us an active faculty for the synthesis of this manifold. To this faculty I give the title, imagination.¹⁵

This process of synthesis presents a mental analogue to the activity of an artist: 'I cannot represent to myself a line, however small, without drawing it in thought, that is, generating from a point all its parts one after another'.¹⁶

Kant's philosophy therefore establishes an analogy between the phenomenal world and a work of art. The imagination is the faculty which unifies the substantial manifold into the objective world of time and space. This leads Schelling to conclude that the phenomenal world should be understood as a place where mind has temporarily relinquished its mastery over matter: 'Being, in our system, is merely freedom suspended'.¹⁷ In both poetry and philosophy, we come to recognise the phenomenal world as our own creation: 'poetry [...] transports us into an ideal world' while 'philosophy [...] makes the real world vanish before our eyes'.¹⁸ The art work, Schelling supposes, therefore allows an intuited objectification of what philosophy reveals intellectually to the subject:

art is at once the only true and eternal organ and document of philosophy, which ever and again continues to speak to us of what philosophy cannot depict in external form, namely the unconscious element in acting and producing, and its original identity with the conscious.¹⁹

¹⁵ Kant, A120.

¹⁶ Kant, A162-63.

¹⁷ Schelling, F.W.J., *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), trans. by Peter Heath (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1978), p.33.

¹⁸ Schelling, pp.13-14.

¹⁹ Schelling, p.231.

Mr Alfred, M.A. contains many allusions to this doctrine that the phenomenal world is similar to a badly-composed picture which the artist has forgotten how to repaint. As we might expect, however, this analogy between everyday reality and artistic representation is depicted as a solace to those alienated individuals who seek out transcendental kinship. After Graeme has failed his exams, for example, we find him repressing his need for sexual communion with Martha:

His alert body was aware of her heartbeat. It was going at a terrific rate. He thought he had only to keep at her a moment more and she would give in. But the racing throb of that necessary engine frightened him. So fast her heart was going it seemed it could only end in a crashing stop. Let it beat forever, he prayed, let me not disturb it further. There was plenty of time. He slackened his grip. (MA 81)

This retreat from the world of time and limitation is licensed by an experience earlier in the day:

The sky was an unbroken blue and the cloudless windless heat made them feel they had wandered into a day from the legendary summers of the past. On a lonely stretch they saw the opposite bank reflected in the motionless water of the mirroring loch. It was an inverted world of tall timeless trees and unpeopled hills. (MA 80)

We here encounter an allusion to Hegel – the ‘inverted world’ was Hegel’s term for any supposed supersensible realm.²⁰ The sight of the loch encourages Graeme and Martha to regard the phenomenal world as possessing merely a secondary, derivative reality. Who is to say that the ‘real’ world is not, like the reflection in the loch, an image itself? The material world may just be one more – peculiarly stubborn – act of the imagination.

Furthermore, the providential storyline of the novel is portrayed as part of this general trend of artistic representation. The metaphor of the inverted world is echoed as Mr Alfred waits for a chance meeting with Rose:

A big puddle in the gutter reflected the building opposite him, making it plunge into the ground as much as it reared above it. He knew it was madness. There was no reason why she should come. [...] Where would she be going or coming from that time of night with the rain lashing down? [...]. He gave it up and went back to his pubcrawl. (MA 133)

This passivity before the kind of accidental causation found in a typical novelistic story indicates his orientation to a supersensible world. It is this 'madness' in which Mr Alfred finds solace despite the train of events which leads to his breakdown. Hospitalised, he is 'suspended between heaven and earth in peaceful solitude' (MA 178). There, he can await his death and its eventual proof of a belief which he attempts to verify earlier in his stay:

he lifted his pants in mistake for his vest and put his arms through the legs. He knew at once there was something wrong but he wasn't sure what. He persisted in his error, trying to achieve a victory of mind over matter by simply willing the pants to become a vest. They didn't. (MA 177)

The eventual victory of mind over matter will come only with his death and the liberation of that suspended psychic freedom which has created the material world of suffering and alienation.

²⁰ See G.W.F. Hegel, 'Force and the understanding: appearance and the supersensible world', in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by A.V. Miller (Oxford: OUP, 1977), pp.79-103.

We are reminded of the function of literary art in promoting this transcendental orientation. The Shelleyan skylark's song hints to Martha and Graeme of a redemption from corporeality in an invisible world:

'Listen!' she cried suddenly.

He smiled, she was so happy.

Obeysing her he listened. He clasped her hand and looked up at the immense sky because she was looking there. A birdsong rose higher and higher and faded to heavenly silence. But he could see nothing. (MA 80)

Accordingly, the young lovers share a certain distaste for everyday intimacy:

They were sitting there in Ianello's, quite content, with a coffee in front of them. Sometimes their hands touched across the table as they spoke, but they never actually held hands. He made no show of affection in public, nor did she. They despised teenagers who did that. They considered themselves older, more mature. (MA 31)

Graeme, nevertheless, feels a passing urge to express his affection for her in a simple, physical way:

The sheen of her blonde hair made him want to stroke it. But he couldn't do that in a public place. Her pale hand, small-palmed and long-fingered, seemed mysteriously different from his own. He wanted to take it and make it as familiar as the square fist that was a congenital part of himself. But he knew she would be annoyed if he held her hand in public. (MA 57)

Since this physical communion is forbidden by Martha, he feels a more 'spiritual' kinship with her:

the good teeth behind her unknissed lips made him long to be taken behind them, to enter into her. But it was a yearning for a penetration beyond physical space. So with her complexion. She was so blonde her pure skin gave him the illusion of seeing a transparency more spiritual than epidermal. There too she tempted him to dream of passing through an insubstantial curtain and dissolving himself within her. (MA 57)

His longing to be kin with her by acts of sexual incorporation is displaced into a metaphysical context. Though they may not physically unite, they are as one in the noumenal reality behind the illusory phenomenal world of the flesh. Beyond this accidental 'insubstantial curtain' is a world where beings are no longer individuated by the media of space and time. To Graeme and Martha, their alienated existence in the objective world is an obsessive-compulsive fantasy which endures through a puzzling suspension of the freedom of the imagination. One may await the end of this bad dream, or one may defeat the fantasy by its inner logic – through suicide.

Friel, then, presents traditional artistic representation as the means by which an essentially Kantian model of reality may be communicated to the reader. The analogy of visual image with everyday reality betokens the illusory nature of the phenomenal world of lonely inauthenticity, and holds out the promise of transcendent de-individuation as recompense. The traditional literary plot is merely a specification and extension of this more general phenomenon: the specious realism of the novel offers transcendent fatalism as a substitute for the everyday recognitive relations which bring about greater authenticity.

Transcendental Kinship and Narrative Representation in the Work of Alasdair Gray

Gray's work provides further literary specification of the idea that artistic representation is an invitation to communion with a higher reality. The narrator's communication with the reader is depicted by Gray as a species of transcendental kinship: from contact with the narratorial perspective, the reader is taught that chronological temporal relations are merely an illusion superimposed upon a timeless reality. This implicit Kantian doctrine is apparent in the character of Jock McLeish: his self-narration is an attempt to contemplate only a few pleasingly arranged fragments of his experience. He anticipates that, by destroying the chronology of his life, he will be able both to forget his unpleasant memories and to lose the capacity to distinguish fantasy from reality. Lived time is therefore reduced by Jock into an atemporal material which may be re-arranged into a more aesthetically pleasing composition. The literary paradigm of this capacity is the well-known modernist motif of involuntary memory; and it is this experience which is apparent both in Jock's self-fragmentation, and in *Lanark's* recall of his failure to represent Unthank.

Gray's innovative formal devices break this essentially Kantian analogy between lived time and narrated novelistic time. The implicit temporal phenomenism of narration is foregrounded during *Lanark* and Rima's journey through the Intercalendrical Zone. The displacement of the temporal flexibility of narrative onto their story defamiliarises the operations of repetition, anticipation, and flashback. Because this creates a fantastic story, the reader is reminded that the narration of

events differs greatly from the experience of events. Furthermore, Lanark's encounter with Nastler provides an analogy between the passivity of the reader before the predetermined ending of a novelistic narrative and the powerlessness of a subject before a predetermined life-history. The framing of the fourth book of *Lanark* as a prediction resists this analogy, however, by gesturing towards the lived contingency which cannot be represented within a preprinted narrative.

An examination of the narrator of *Lanark* introduces us to the idea that novelistic narration is an invitation to regard the everyday world as a phenomenal scene derived from a noumenal reality. The 'oracle' tells us that

if we were content to describe each other numerically, giving height, weight, date of birth, size of family, home address, business address and (most informative of all) annual income, we would see that below the jangling opinions was no disagreement on the main realities. (L 108)

This quantification of others provides an escape from the uncertainties of intersubjective validation. The oracle, however, understands his alienation from the social world as a transcendence of the corporeal world: 'I had become bodiless in a bodiless world. I existed as a series of thoughts amidst infinite greyness.' (L 111); the realm of number is the ideal 'main reality' upon which the dialectic of recognition exists as an accident.

This orientation to a higher, non-corporeal reality is, of course, a traditional philosophical virtue. For Plato, the embodied self is tempted to take the phenomenal world as real:

'The soul of every man, when intensely pleased or pained at something, is forced at the same time to suppose that whatever most affects it in this way is most clear and most real, when it is not so; and such objects especially are things seen.'²¹

The philosopher's soul, however, withdraws from the pleasures and pains of embodied existence. The love of wisdom releases the soul by

'urging it to collect and gather itself together, and to trust none other but itself, whenever, alone by itself, it thinks of any of the things that are, [...]; and not to regard as real what it observes by other means, and what varies in various things; that kind of thing is sensible and seen, whereas the object of its own vision is intelligible and invisible.'²²

The philosopher therefore prefers the supersensible, atemporal world to the world of embodiment and mutability. This is his initiation into a transcendental kin-group:

'wisdom [is] itself a kind of purifying rite. So it really looks as if those who established our initiations are no mean people, but have in fact long been saying in riddles that whoever arrives in Hades unadmitted to the rites, and uninitiated shall lie in the slough, while he who arrives there purified and initiated shall dwell with gods.'²³

The narrator of *Lanark* provides a paradigm for my analysis: I will show how narration is depicted in Gray's work as a transcendental escape-route from everyday alienation. The character of Jock McLeish specifies and explains this narratorial capacity to transcend the temporal world. The first half of 1982 *Janine* concerns Jock's refusal to recall the story which led to his abandonment of Denny, and his marriage to Helen: 'The story of *how I went wrong* is called From the Cage to the Trap and describes events which took place in my eighteenth year of life during

²¹ Plato, *Phaedo*, trans. by David Gallop (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), 83c.

²² Plato, 83a-b.

²³ Plato, 69c.

certain months of 1953' (J 191). 'These months [...] contain my meanest and most cowardly actions, actions I have been trying to forget ever since' (J 192); thus, he reflects, 'I don't want to remember the past [...]. The past is a flowering minefield. All the goodness I have known grows there but grows among explosives which drive shrapnel into my brain whenever I disturb them' (J 133).

Jock therefore uses a variety of techniques to prevent his stream-of-consciousness from developing into an unpleasant narrative train-of-thought. This self-distraction can be clarified if we examine an act of forgetting which occurs during the course of Jock's narration:

I thought I was smart in that suit but no I looked prim and dull which is why I chose GLAMOUR, chose Helen. Liar. Helen chose me oh, I will gnaw the fingers of this hand to the bone.

Ouch

That hurt. Calm down. Where was I? Thinking about rape. (J 58)

Pain has a powerful capacity to focus the mind on immediate sensation and thereby to stem the flow of mental associations which might otherwise crowd into the mind. Sexual arousal, however, is Jock's primary way of exploiting this capacity. This is first apparent during his adolescent evenings at home with his mother:

My happiest moments were passed with that woman. She kept me indoors but she never interfered with my mind. Between the pages of a book I had a newspaper clipping to carry my thoughts miles and miles away, an advert for *The Outlaw* – MEAN! MOODY! MAGNIFICENT! above a photograph of Jane Russell, her blouse pulled off both shoulders (J 19).

Of course, sexual arousal only maintains its fascinating power so long as it does not reach a climax; and this is why Jock would wish never to lose control:

I am entering Jane Russell the editor Janine Sontag Big Momma Helen forget her forget her and I am at home again. At home again. At home again. No. No. No. No I am not. I am alone. Alone. Alone. I am absolutely alone.
 [...] HELL HELL HELL I lost control, I lost control. (J 55-56)

Without sexual excitement to mesmerise his mind, his thoughts return to the failure of his own life: 'I hate the *thing*, I hate orgasm, I'm lonely afterward' (J 29). Despite his powers of fantasy, Jock's misery nags as insistently at him as any physical pain: 'Superb is imaginary. Helen was real. Why can't I keep them apart?' (J 33). Jock would prefer that they remain separated because 'my few nice memories of love with real women conjure up remorse and rage at what I have lost' (J 37). We notice, therefore, the irony of Jock's unwillingness to discuss his sexual fantasies with Sontag: 'I wanted to keep fantasy and reality firmly separate because surely that is the foundation of all sanity?' (J 41). Jock, in fact, wishes to keep his fantasies apart from reality so that he might have a secure refuge from the misery of his quotidian existence: 'This is splendid. I have never before enjoyed such perfect control. I have abandoned Janine at the exact moment when I nearly got too excited, and I have remembered nobody real except my mother' (J 28).

It is in order to enforce this separation of fantasy from reality that Jock reaches for the bottle when memories arise of how Mr Hume played upon his sense of original sin:

I hated most of all a total stranger old enough to be my father who walked past me with his two sons into the middle of my own room and WHISKY quickquickquickquick on to the floor, get the emergency bottle out of the, damn this lock, case under the bed. (J 69)

Alcohol allows Jock to further fragment his own self-consciousness and to reflect on a life reduced, he anticipates, to disordered moments of real and imagined happiness: ‘Sip slowly. The parts of this mind are blissfully disconnecting, thoughts separating from memories, memories from fantasies. If I am lucky nothing now will float to my surface but delicious fragments’ (J 69). Jock looks forward to a mastery of mind over matter like that which was postulated in Schelling’s response to Kantianism, and which Mr Alfred could only briefly glimpse:

The little clock went on ticking patiently because there was nothing else it could do. Mr Alfred said into himself the first line of a poem he had lately read, ‘The house was quiet and the world was calm’. It called up the small hours when he used to read poetry alone in his room and write little poems for himself. He was taken back, at peace with a glass in his hand and a verse in his head. (MA 16)

By the use of intense sensations and alcohol, Jock McLeish therefore attempts to reduce chronology to temporal atoms which may then be selected, ordered and contemplated at will. In a lengthy passage, Jock explicitly connects such experience with modernist aesthetics:

I once started the Proust novel about *Time Redeemed* but soon gave up. [...] However, something in the first few pages made a distinct impression. When the hero is an old man he chews a sweet cake of the sort his auntie gave him when he was a wee boy, and because the taste of the cake is exactly the same as in the past he enjoys it just as much. And the million things which happened to him since he first tasted that cake – the aunt’s death, a world war which destroyed his home and killed his friends – these are suddenly a slight detour away from and back to a moment which is exactly the same. Eating that cake abolished time for him. Women’s bodies do that for me when I am allowed to hold them and I stop being nervous. (J 166)

Stevenson’s analysis of this Proustian phenomenon is significant:

Involuntary memory [...] – the kind of association triggered almost automatically by a sound, a smell, a blatter of rain, or an otherwise random sensual experience in the present – does not simply or deliberately *call* to mind some remembered scene or detail. Instead it so suffuses the mind with floods of old sensation that characters are left virtually transformed into earlier versions of themselves.²⁴

Thus, Stevenson tells us, quoting from *A la recherche du temps perdu*, Proust ‘seeks explicitly to create a fiction which ‘suppresses the mighty dimension of Time’, one able to ‘make visible, to intellectualise in a work of art, realities that were outside time.’²⁵ Involuntary memory allows vivid recollection in which memory images strike with the force of impressions – as if, indeed, the past were truly present. By focusing narrative through the involuntary memory of the protagonist, an author can seemingly provide an everyday experience in which to ground the doctrine that chronological time is merely one of the illusory orderings with which the soul may veil a higher, non-temporal reality.

Of course, if the ‘order in which events befell’ is as illusory as any other narrative order, then one is quite at liberty to replace it with a more pleasing composition. This corollary to involuntary memory is particularly clear in *Lanark*. On the first night of the general assembly, Lanark gets drunk and has sex with one or more hostesses. Immediately after the narration of this event, we are given what seems to be an account of Lanark and Sandy walking in the countryside. This scene seems initially to the reader to be an instant of real happiness in Lanark’s life:

²⁴ Randall Stevenson, *Modernist Fiction: An Introduction* (Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), p.89.

²⁵ Stevenson, pp.87-88.

"I am so content that I don't care when contentment ends. I don't care what absurdity, failure, death I am moving toward. Even when your world has lapsed into black nothing, it will have made sense because Sandy once enjoyed it in the sunlight." (L 515)

The ontological status of this experience, however, soon becomes apparent: 'He plunged across the heather, tripped and fell into darkness. He wrestled awhile with something entangling, then realized it was blankets and sat up' (L 517). This fantastic moment could only appear real if Lanark were to refuse to order his past into a coherent chronological narrative:

His main feeling was of filth, disorder and loss. He had lost someone or something, a secret document, a parent, or his self-respect. The past seemed a muddle of memories without sequence, like a confused pile of old photographs. To sort them out he tried recalling his life from the start. (L 517)

He must overcome the attractions of a comfortable modernist amnesia: 'His thoughts recoiled [...] like fingers from a scalding plate, but he forced them back to it and gradually more recent, more depressing memories came to him' (L 518).

Jock McLeish, however, is initially unwilling to give up his amnesia, even as his uncomfortable memories intrude on the pleasant fragments of his life. We therefore find him counting out sleeping pills, ready to die rather than to remember:

stop remembering that he came round the counter and quietly put his hand in my pockets and took out all I had stole and laid it on the counter and 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50 will do the trick but I still have 51, 52, 53, 54, 55 and 56 if I *cannot stop* remembering that he said

Stopped. Good! (J 163-64)

The boy, we will recall, recognised Jock with a few words: "'Out of respect for your age and pity for your condition I am taking no steps in this matter'" (J 173).

Nevertheless, despite his efforts to forget, Jock finds himself addressed by a voice that drags memories of his own self-betrayal into the midst of his fantasy world: ‘You’ve been here for a long time, sabotaging my exotic sexdreams with old memories of the homely facts, upsetting my arguments with awkward questions slipped in among them (so to speak) between brackets’ (J 194). It is this voice which raises, for example, memories of Mr Hislop, and Helen, and Denny. It can even be found upsetting Jock’s fantasies about a row of female characters where ‘singly each woman stands like an upsidedown capital Y’ (J 116). These come to remind him of the uninverted characters ‘Y Y Y’ (J 117), which ask phonetically ‘Why Why Why’? Indeed, Jock eventually comes to realise that this voice inhabited even his inmost sadomasochistic fantasies:

I had started telling myself stories about a very free attractive greedy woman who, confident in her powers, begins an exciting adventure and finds she is not free at all but completely at the disposal of others. As I aged that story grew very elaborate. The woman is corrupted into enjoying her bondage and trapping others into it. I did not notice that this was the story of my own life. I avoided doing so by insisting on the *femaleness* of the main character. The parts of the story which came to excite me most were not the physical humiliations but the moment when the trap starts closing (J 193-94).

What seemed to Jock to be imaginative freedom was merely an elaborately distorted brooding on his own spiritual imprisonment.

To break free from this bondage, Jock must refer back to a time of authenticity when ‘I was richer and happier than kings presidents millionaires etcetera, for my talent and personality were recognised’ (J 191); this was a time – a ‘straight stretch’ – when he had leapt into recognitive ethical authenticity:

When we cannot see our way in the world of course we circle circle circle until we stumble on a straight stretch of it, but then, even though that stretch was left behind years ago, let us use it to go *forward* for a change. (J 192)

Jock must work out why he has reached his present condition by telling 'the story of *how I went wrong*' (J 191). This, he understands, is something which he has continually evaded:

I am postponing the moment when I start telling my story in the difficult oldfashioned way, placing events in the order they befell so that I recall the purchase of my new suit before, and not after, I seduce Denny in it. This had better be done, though it will be hard. (J 192)

In this way, he will bring to mind his own unhappiness, and be motivated to seek out an uncertain, unforeseeable authenticity: 'Nobody will guess what I am going to do. I do not know it myself' (J 341). He must therefore refuse to regard his own life as if it were merely predetermined material which may be pleasingly re-ordered by an appropriate non-chronological narrative form.

In *Lanark*, we encounter structural resistance to the pernicious analogy between lived time and narrated time. Let us refer to Genette in order to be reminded of some of the peculiarities of narrative time:

we will study relations between the time of the story and the (pseudo-) time of the narrative according to what seem to me to be three essential determinations; connections between the temporal *order* of succession of the events in the story and the pseudo-temporal order of their arrangement in the narrative, which will be the subject of the first chapter; connections between the variable *duration* of these events or story sections and the pseudo-duration (in fact, length of text) of their telling in the narrative – connections, thus, of *speed* – which will be the subject of the second chapter; finally connections of *frequency*, that is (to limit myself to an approximate formulation), relations between the repetitive capacities of the story and those of the narrative, relations to which the third chapter will be devoted.²⁶

²⁶ Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 1980), p.35.

We should also have reference to another of Genette's distinctions: 'I propose [...] to use the word *story* for the signified or narrative content' and 'to use the word *narrative* for the signifier, statement, discourse or narrative text itself'.²⁷

In the Intercalendrical Zone, we encounter peculiarities of order, frequency, and speed presented as if they were on the level of story. In terms of order, we find, for example, that Lanark and Rima hear their own conversations before they happen:

they were passed by footsteps and voices going the opposite way. The voices travelled in clusters of two and three and spoke quietly and indistinctly except for a couple who seemed to be arguing.

"... a form of life like you or me."

"... here's ferns and grass. ..." (L 381)

Narrative anticipation – Genette's 'prolepsis'²⁸ – is presented as story. Narrative repetition is also substantialised in Lanark and Rima's world:

A tall blond girl, wearing a black coat and a knapsack, squatted on the road with her hands over her face. Rima whispered, "Is it me?"

Lanark nodded, went to the girl and knelt beside her. Rima gave a little hysterical giggle. "Aren't you forgetting? You've done that already." (L 378)

It is, then, in a quite literal, if fictional, sense that Lanark is tempted to live in the past by this fragment of Rima:

The upright Rima walked past him, saying coldly, "Stop living in the past."

"But I can't leave a bit of you sitting on the road like this."

²⁷ Genette, p.27.

²⁸ Genette, p.67.

"All right, drag her along. I suppose helpless women make you feel strong and superior, but you'll find her a bore eventually." (L 378-79)

Variations in narrative speed are also narrated as story. A narrative might briefly summarise the progress of Rima's pregnancy; in the Intercalendrical Zone, she simply does develop at an extraordinary rate:

Rima stood still and said desperately, "I can't go on. My back hurts, my stomach's swollen, and this coat is far too tight."
Lanark stared in surprise. The dress had hung loose from her shoulders, but now her stomach was swollen almost to her breasts and the amber velvet was as tight as the skin of a balloon. (L 386)

Furthermore, the varying gradient of each side of the road suggests that the line marks a boundary between different narrative tempos:

The road seemed to rise steeply for it became difficult to walk fast, so he was surprised to see Rima vanishing into the mist a few paces ahead. With an effort he came beside her. She didn't seem to be running, but her strides covered great distances. (L 376)

We should also note that Lanark and Rima leave the road:

"Come on, there's a slope. Let's climb it."
[...]

Beyond the toadstools the road vanished under an overgrown embankment. Lanark scrambled forward and Rima, grumbling, came after. (L 384)

This is quite contrary to Munro's instructions: "The road is fairly distinct, so keep to it" (L 373). Lanark and Rima therefore never truly leave the Intercalendrical Zone. In Unthank, Sandy, for example, teethes at an unnatural rate: 'Lanark put a finger in the small mouth and felt a tiny bone edge coming through the gum. He said uneasily, "We

age quickly in this world” (L 428). The solidification of narrative into story therefore persists even after Lanark and Rima seem to have left the Zone.

The Intercalendrical Zone is therefore a formally encoded warning against living one's life in terms of novelistic temporality. The relation of a narrator to his or her materials is essentially atemporal: he or she can arrange any elements of the story in any order with any repetition – as if Kant's transcendental subject had been given absolute freedom to order in any way the temporal manifold. This freedom, of course, does not exist outside of narrative representation. When narrative is made into story it becomes fantastic, and we are reminded that narrative time is not lived time. We cannot quickly summarise a heartbreaking experience; nor can we extend to epic length an evening's love-making. We cannot elide our suffering; nor live and re-live our best moments.²⁹

²⁹ It is interesting to note the parallels between Gray and Kurt Vonnegut. Billy Pilgrim, the protagonist of *Slaughterhouse-Five*, faces death with equanimity:

'It is time for you to go home to your wives and children, and it is time for me to be dead for a little while – and then live again.' At that moment, Billy's high forehead is in the cross hairs of a high-powered laser gun. (SF 104)

Billy's composure is the result of his fraternity with an alien race called the Tralfamadorians. Their consciousness transcends everyday temporality; and so they hold an interesting – and, to us, familiar – doctrine on the unreality of time:

[Billy Pilgrim]: 'The most important thing I learned on Tralfamadore was that when a person dies he only *appears* to die. He is still very much alive in the past, so it is very silly for people to cry at his funeral. All moments, past, present, and future, always have existed, always will exist. The Tralfamadorians can look at all the different moments just the way we can look at a stretch of the Rocky Mountains, for instance. They can see how permanent all the moments are, and they can look at any moment that interests them. It is just an illusion we have here on Earth that one moment follows another one, like beads on a string, and that once a moment is gone it is gone forever.' (SF 19-20)

Billy therefore acquiesces in the fatalism that he detects in the Tralfamadorians:

[Tralfamadorian:] 'Earthlings are the great explainers, explaining why this event is structured as it is, telling how other events may be achieved or avoided. I am a Tralfamadorian, seeing all time as you might see a stretch of the Rocky Mountains. All time is all time. It does not change. It does not

Gray's work further weakens the analogy between narration and experience by foregrounding the implicit determinism of such a comparison. Nastler, Gray's fictional author of *Lanark*, makes an analogy between the process of reading a story, and the subjective construction of a world from indivisible monads:

[Nastler]: "Everything you have experienced and are experiencing [...] is made of one thing."

"Atoms," said Lanark.

"Some worlds are made of atoms but yours is made of tiny marks marching in neat lines, like armies of insects, across pages and pages and pages of white paper. I say these lines are marching, but that is a metaphor. They are perfectly still. They are lifeless. How can *they* reproduce the movement and noises of the battle of Borodino, the white whale ramming the ship, the fallen angels on the flaming lake?"

"By being read," said Lanark impatiently. (L 484-85)³⁰

The author, then, is like an atemporal Creator; and the reader is like the Kantian subject who brings extension to space and continuity to time: "I'm like God the Father, you see, [...] and a reader is a Holy Ghost who keeps everything joined together and moving along" (L 495). It is appropriate, then, that Nastler is a 'conjurer' (L 484), and an 'illusionist' (L 494) – with the reader's co-operation, he creates a world of illusory temporality.

We are therefore reminded that the process of reading is a dangerous metaphor for human existence: it encourages us to regard contingency as if it were merely that epistemic uncertainty which one holds towards the predetermined end of

lend itself to warnings or explanations. It simply *is*. Take it moment by moment, and you will find that we are all, as I've said before, bugs in amber.'

'You sound to me as though you don't believe in free will,' said Billy Pilgrim. (SF 62)

It may well be that Vonnegut's supposed postmodernist textual practice has much more to do with old-fashioned humanism.

³⁰ The Critic remarks that 'this is a false antithesis [between atoms and print]. Printed paper has an atomic structure like anything else' (L 485). This is, indeed, true; but type – like the Kantian world – is measured, of course, in 'points'.

an unread narrative. Those who succumb to this misconception are drawn towards self-fragmentation: their life-history shatters into disconnected temporal monads from which any subset may be selected for delightful contemplation. This is why, as Jock fantasises about his female alter ego, the reader encounters a significant metaphor for spiritual bondage: 'The whole dream was inside the car. She was Janine, a rich Janine wearing CATTLEMARKET cowhide breeks. She discovered she was reading a story about what would happen when she left the car' (J 318). The relation between character and author is a metaphor for Jock's passivity before the demands of 'National Security': '*She realises it is her inescapable fate to be a character in a story by someone who dictates every one of her movements and emotions, someone she will never meet and cannot appeal to*' (J 332).

The predetermination of the novelistic story is therefore another way in which the analogy between narration and temporal experience breaks down. Sartre's response to the Kantian position illustrates well the ultimate failure of temporal phenomenalism. He reminds us that, for Kant, 'temporal unity, at the heart of which is revealed the synthetic relation before-after, is conferred on the multiplicity of instants by a being who himself escapes temporality.'³¹ Can we say that Kant succeeds in his attempt to recover time from 'an infinite dust of instants'³²? Surely not, for if 'temporality becomes a simple external and abstract relation between non-temporal substances' then there can be no way in which to 'reconstruct it entirely with a-temporal materials'³³: 'Either we will implicitly and surreptitiously temporalize the

³¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. by Hazel E. Barnes (London: Routledge, 1969), pp.132-33.

³² Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p.131.

³³ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p.133.

non-temporal; or else if we scrupulously preserve its non-temporality, time will become a pure human illusion, a dream.³⁴ Sartre is surely correct here: given that what is primarily real is timeless, then 'the chronological order is only the confused perception of an order which is logical and eternal.'³⁵ Such a world is without a genuine future:

'Man is the future of Man'. That is exactly true. Only, if one took this to mean that the future is laid up in heaven, that God knows what it is, it would be false, for then it would no longer be a future.³⁶

The phenomenalist analogy of temporal experience to reading must therefore founder because no place can be found in it for future contingency. It is in this light that we should examine the order of the books which make up *Lanark*. Nastler reminds the reader of their peculiar arrangement:

[Nastler:] "When *Lanark* is finished [...] it will be [...] divided into books three, one, two and four."

[Lanark:] "Why not one, two, three and four?"

"I want *Lanark* to be read in one order but eventually thought of in another." (L 483)

What, then, can be learned by thinking of *Lanark* in this different order? The Prologue and the first two books are quite obviously the oracle's narrative of Thaw's life. Significantly, we should note that the narratorial voice of the third book is also that of the oracle:

³⁴ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p.133.

³⁵ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p.133.

³⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, trans. by Philip Mairet (London: Methuen, 1948), p.34.

Rima asked who was there and a moment after the voice spoke directly into his ear. It was sexless and eager but on an odd unemphatic note, as if its words could never be printed between quotation marks.

It said I am glad you called. (L 104)

The oracle here refers to himself both in the first person – as ‘I’ – and in the third person – as ‘the voice’ and ‘it’. Thus, the third book extends the oracle’s account of what has befallen Thaw and Lanark up until the point at which Lanark asks the oracle to narrate. In order to appreciate further the continuity of the narratorial voice in *Lanark*, we should refer to Genette on the temporal relation between the story and the act of narration:

It is therefore necessary, merely from the point of view of temporal position, to differentiate four types of narrating: *subsequent* (the classical position of the past-tense narrative, undoubtedly far and away the most frequent); *prior* (predictive narrative, generally in the future tense, but not prohibited from being conjugated in the present, like Jocabel’s dream in *Moyse sauvé*); *simultaneous* (narrative in the present contemporaneous with the actions); and *interpolated* (between the moments of the action).³⁷

The narratorial voice of *Lanark* is explicitly the voice of an ‘oracle’ – it also narrates predictively. Unless we arbitrarily posit two narrators for *Lanark*, then we must recognise that the oracle continues to speak beyond the end of Book Three, and tells Lanark of events which have not yet occurred. The words ‘Lanark opened his eyes and looked thoughtfully round the ward’ (L 357), which begin the fourth book, are the oracle’s prior narration, conjugated in the past tense, of events which happen after he has concluded his response to Lanark’s inquiry. In a significant sense, then, the

³⁷ Genette, p.217.

events of the fourth book do not happen: they are merely the oracle's prediction of what will – or may – occur after he has completed his act of narration.

This structure therefore gestures towards the narrative contingency of which the pre-printed text of *Lanark* cannot partake. Although the text certainly cannot change, the relation of the narrative to the story can be modified: Book Four is a narrative of a story which may not yet happen. Lanark's loss of Rima and Sandy, and his failure as a delegate, are therefore possibilities which have yet to be realised in his fictional future. *Lanark* therefore further challenges the traditional use of narrative representation as evidence for temporal phenomenalism. As well as exposing the disjunction between lived and narrated time, *Lanark* also fails to supply a predetermined story upon which the narrator may employ his techniques – there are no timeless monads upon which the Kantian narrator may perform his imaginative synthesis.

Rather than inviting the reader to the threshold of a higher reality, Gray's work therefore exposes and evades the artifice by which narrative may seek to reduce everyday temporality to an insubstantial curtain which conceals a timeless noumenal world. The traditional novelistic presentation of time is shown to be a response to the absence of fulfilling cognitive relations: those who regard time as merely phenomenal can avoid consciousness of their own inauthentic lives by their ascent to a transcendent perspective upon the temporal atoms of existence. If Gray's work did not subvert this perspective then he too would participate in this literary soteriology – his novels would themselves be an invitation to transcendental kinship with the narratorial perspective. In such circumstances, Gray would be, quite literally, a cult author.

Conclusion

We see, in the work of Friel and Gray, that the conventional story and narration of the novel are depicted as an invitation to regard the everyday world as unreal. The providential form of the novelistic plot, and the peculiarities of narrative time, may seduce the reader into regarding the everyday world as an alienated product of the imagination. Both Friel and Gray must foreground this potential for transcendental kinship through artistic communication. If they did not, then their readers might accept an implicit literary offer of transcendental kinship even as they were confronted with its critique in the fictional subject-matter of the text.

CONCLUSION

RECOGNITION AND THE DIVIDED SELF IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY SCOTTISH THOUGHT

Introduction

We saw in the last chapter that literary art may be used to lend credibility to the metaphysical doctrine that the everyday world is an illusion built upon a higher reality which is neither spatial nor temporal. We further saw that, for Friel and Gray, this belief system is the property of those individuals who are excommunicated in some way from everyday kinship relations. The supersensible world may be seen as the place in which accidental causation has its true reality as the essential causation of an authentic ethos. Belief in a supersensible realm also reduces the world of quotidian unhappiness to an atemporal material which may be re-arranged at will by a suitably developed psyche.

The resistance to this worldview which is apparent in the work of Friel and Gray is part of a distinct – if neglected – line of recent Scottish thought. This chapter will elaborate and explain this local philosophical tradition. I begin by briefly relating the work of William Robertson Smith on kinship to the ‘object-relations’ theory of W.R.D. Fairbairn. The latter re-interprets Freudian psycho-analysis by arguing that libido is primarily a medium of intersubjective recognition. It is only when social relations are especially frustrating that others become simply the means to hedonistic

gratification – and even this psychic utilitarianism is merely the result of a compensatory inner-life of fantastic relationships with imaginary others. I survey modern Western philosophy in order to show that this solipsistic ‘schizoid’ self, for whom the real world is that of thought and imagination, is fundamentally the ego of the Cartesian tradition. I then turn to the work of John Macmurray in order to discover a detailed critique of the Cartesian analysis which establishes an alternative account of human being as fundamentally social and practical. The Cartesian ego is, for Macmurray, merely the result of an attempt to justify rationally the schizoid position. This evasion of real intersubjectivity is, he argues, the result of a personality which is unable to grow up and accept its allotted social role. Laing, despite his great affinity with Macmurray, provides a more sympathetic analysis: the schizoid personality, he argues, more often indicates a social world which cannot accept the authentic selfhood of the individual in question. Laing’s argument is the final link in the articulation of the philosophical position which underlies my analysis of transcendental kinship in the work of Friel and Gray.

W.R.D. Fairbairn and the 'Schizoid' Self

We will recall that William Robertson Smith advanced a theory of kinship in which the communion meal played a central role. Robertson Smith regarded this ritual as magical; we saw, however, that it is best understood in Aristotelian terms. This is especially apparent in the bodily metaphor which links the Arabic account of kinship with the account given in *Politics*. The rituals of kinship are acts of recognition which establish mutually related identities between the 'members' of a group. If we explore further the work of Scottish thinkers, we can continue to follow this line of recognitive thought.

The motifs of Victorian Scottish social anthropology re-emerge in the work of the twentieth-century Scottish psycho-analyst, W.R.D. Fairbairn. He almost exactly echoes Robertson Smith's view that suckling is the earliest mark of kinship:

So far as the infant is concerned, the mouth is the chief organ of desire, the chief instrument of activity, the chief medium of satisfaction and frustration, the chief channel of love and hate, and, most important of all, the first means of intimate social contact. The first social relationship established by the individual is that between himself and his mother; and the focus of this relationship is the suckling situation, in which his mother's breast provides the focal point of his libidinal object, and his mouth the focal point of his own libidinal attitude.¹

Fairbairn therefore regards conventional Freudian psycho-analysis as essentially mistaken in its understanding of the relationship between libido and object. The other person, or 'object', is not a means to libidinal satisfaction; rather, the libido is a means by which to establish a relationship with the object:

¹ W.R.D. Fairbairn, 'Schizoid Factors in the Personality', in *Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality* (London: Tavistock with Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952), pp.3-27 (pp.10-11).

The conception of fundamental erotogenic zones constitutes an unsatisfactory basis for any theory of libidinal development because it is based upon a failure to recognize that the function of libidinal pleasure is essentially to provide a sign-post to the object. According to the conception of erotogenic zones the object is regarded as a sign-post to libidinal pleasure; and the cart is thus placed before the horse.²

As we might expect, this criticism of Freudian assumptions is indebted to Aristotle:

Psychological hedonism for long appeared to the writer to provide an unsatisfactory basis for psychoanalytical theory because it relegates object-relationships to a secondary place. Indeed, it involves the implicit assumption that man is not by nature a social animal [...] as Aristotle described him in *Politics* [...], and that, accordingly, social behaviour is an acquired characteristic.³

Fairbairn therefore argues that behaviour which seems auto-erotic is merely the deteriorated expression of a need for object-relationships:

Why does a baby suck his thumb? Upon the answer to this simple question depends the whole validity of the conception of erotogenic zones and the form of libido theory based upon it. If we answer that the baby sucks his thumb because his mouth is an erotogenic zone and sucking provides him with erotic pleasure, it may sound convincing enough; but we are really missing the point. To bring out the point, we must ask ourselves the further question – ‘Why his thumb?’ And the answer to this question is – ‘Because there is no breast to suck’. Even the baby must have a libidinal object; and, if he is deprived of his natural object (the breast), he is driven to provide an object for himself. Thumb-sucking thus represents a technique for dealing with an unsatisfactory object-relationship; and the same may be said of masturbation.⁴

There is no libidinal ‘id’; rather, autoeroticism is merely a symptom of the difficulties in maintaining a satisfying relationship with the object. The inevitable frustrations which attend weaning compel the child to relate to imaginary symbolic substitutes for the mother:

² W.R.D. Fairbairn, ‘A Revised Psychopathology of the Psychoses and Psychoneuroses’, in *Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality* (London: Tavistock with Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952), pp.28-58 (p.33).

³ W.R.D. Fairbairn, ‘Reevaluating Some Basic Concepts’, in *From Instinct to Self: Selected Papers of W.R.D. Fairbairn: Volume I: Clinical and Theoretical Papers*, ed. by David E. Scharff and Ellinor Fairbairn Birtles, 2 vols (Northvale, New Jersey and London: Jason Aronson, 1994), 1, pp.129-38 (pp.131-32)

⁴ Fairbairn, ‘Schizoid Factors’, p.33.

1. An ego is present from birth.
2. Libido is a function of the ego.
3. There is no death instinct; and aggression is a reaction to frustration or deprivation.
4. Since libido is a function of the ego and aggression is a reaction to frustration or deprivation, there is no such thing as an 'id'.
5. The ego, and therefore libido, is fundamentally object-seeking.
6. The earliest and original form of anxiety, as experienced by the child, is separation-anxiety.
7. Internalization of the object is a defensive measure originally adopted by the child to deal with his original object (the mother and her breast) in so far as it is unsatisfying.⁵

When this infantile defence mechanism recurs in adulthood, there arises the 'schizoid' character: 'the orientation towards partial objects found in individuals displaying schizoid features is largely a regressive phenomenon determined by unsatisfactory emotional relationships with their parents, and particularly their mothers.'⁶ The schizogenic relationship is 'a situation of emotional frustration in which the child comes to feel (a) that he is not really loved for himself as a person by his mother, and (b) that his own love for his mother is not really valued and accepted by her.'⁷ The schizoid is so-called because of 'splits in the ego'⁸ consequent upon this failure in recognitive relations. He develops, as it were, two selves, and this is because he prefers to relate not to real others, but to imaginary others: 'there is a general tendency on the part of individuals with a schizoid component to heap up their values in the inner world. [...] Their objects tend to belong to the inner rather than to the outer world.'⁹ Real others – real 'objects' – are exploited as props with which to sustain an imaginary relationship: 'those with schizoid characteristics [...] treat

⁵ W.R.D. Fairbairn, 'An Object Relations Theory of the Personality', in *From Instinct to Self: Selected Papers of W.R.D. Fairbairn: Volume I: Clinical and Theoretical Papers*, ed. by David E. Scharff and Ellinor Fairbairn Birtles, 2 vols (Northvale, New Jersey and London: Jason Aronson, 1994), I, pp.155-56 (p.155).

⁶ W.R.D. Fairbairn, 'Schizoid Factors', p.13.

⁷ W.R.D. Fairbairn, 'Schizoid Factors', p.17.

⁸ W. R. D. Fairbairn, 'Schizoid Factors', p.8.

libidinal objects as means of satisfying their own requirements rather than as persons possessing inherent value.⁹¹⁰ Thus, we encounter

the schizoid tendency to treat other people as less than persons with an inherent value of their own. Such a tendency may be illustrated in the case of a highly intelligent man of a schizoid type, who came to consult me because he felt that he could make no real emotional contact with his wife, was unduly critical towards her and was morose with her on occasions when a display of affection would have been more appropriate. After describing his very selfish attitude towards her, he added that his habits were unsociable in general, and that he treated other people more or less as if they were lower animals.¹¹

The everyday intersubjective life of the schizoid is a role played out for the gratification it affords his 'real' life of inner relations with imaginary others.

The relevance of Fairbairn's concept to the preceding chapters of this thesis should, by now, be clear. The 'schizoid' type is readily apparent in the transcendental kinship of characters such as Duncan Thaw, Percy Phinn and Miss Partridge. However, before I can develop further this relevance of the 'divided self', it is necessary to consider the potential philosophical opposition to this concept. After all, metaphysics would, as we have seen, tend to suggest that the everyday world is indeed an inferior realm of alienated imagination. The schizoid position is therefore only unreasonable if Western philosophy can be shown to be irrational. Before this can be done, it is necessary to articulate the connection between the divided self and the basic premises of this tradition.

⁹ W.R.D. Fairbairn, 'Schizoid Factors', p.18.

¹⁰ W.R.D. Fairbairn, 'Schizoid Factors', p.13.

¹¹ W.R.D. Fairbairn, 'Schizoid Factors', p.12.

Metaphysics and the Divided Self

The complicity between the schizoid self and metaphysics arises in the disjunction between what is taken as rational belief in everyday existence, and what is rational belief in terms of traditional epistemology. Despite attempted solutions such as the ontological argument, or transcendental idealism, day-to-day existence remains irrational when measured against the canon of pure reason. Inevitably, the schizoid position is affirmed: everyday belief in time, space, objects, causality, and other people, is the insidious work of the irrational body upon the purely reasonable soul of the philosopher.

This division of the self can be traced to the importance of the principle of non-contradiction for traditional epistemology. It is assumed that all valid thought is ultimately reducible to the rule of formal consistency. Aristotle, for example, tells us that this is the most basic criterion of knowledge:

it is impossible for anyone to believe the same thing to be and not to be, as some think Heraclitus says; for what a man says he does not necessarily believe. If it is impossible that contrary attributes should belong at the same time to the same subject [...], and if an opinion which contradicts another is contrary to it, obviously it is impossible for the same man at the same time to believe the same thing to be and not to be; for, if a man were mistaken in this point he would have contrary opinions at the same time. It is for this reason that all who are carrying out a demonstration refer it to this as an ultimate belief; for this is naturally the starting-point even for all other axioms.¹²

This principle is so powerful because it is the condition of all intelligible theorising.

Anyone who attempts to deny it,

¹² Aristotle, 'Metaphysics', trans. by W.D. Ross, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. by Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University, 1984), II, pp.1552-1728 (1005b).

can neither speak nor say anything intelligible; for he says at the same time both 'yes' and 'no'. And if he makes no judgement but thinks and does not think, indifferently, what difference will there be between him and the plants?¹³

It is the principle of non-contradiction which leads Descartes, the central philosopher of modernity, to conclude that he has legitimate doubt in those cases where he can conceive of his own existence without some other existent. His analysis is couched in the language of substance and accident with which we are already familiar:

examining attentively that which I was, I saw that I could conceive that I had no body, and that there was no world nor place where I might be; but yet that I could not for all that conceive that I was not. On the contrary, I saw from the very fact that I thought of doubting the truth of other things, it very evidently and certainly followed that I was; on the other hand if I had only ceased from thinking, even if all the rest of what I had ever imagined had really existed, I should have no reason for thinking that I had existed. From that I knew that I was a substance the whole essence or nature of which is to think, and that for its existence there is no need of any place, nor does it depend on any material thing¹⁴.

Descartes asks if one can conceive that there are no other people, or other things, or that one does not have a body, and that one yet exists. His answer is in all cases affirmative: one is a substance independent of other people, or things, or a body. However, if, by doubting that one doubts, one attempts to conceive of the absence of thought, then one finds that this is nonsensical: a thing cannot be both A and not-A at the same time in the same respect; the 'I', therefore, cannot both be doubting and not-doubting at the same time – 'I doubt that I doubt' is nonsensical. The property of a

¹³ Aristotle, 'Metaphysics', 1008b.

¹⁴ René Descartes, 'Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting the Reason', in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, trans. by Elizabeth S. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1911), I, pp.81-130 (p.101).

substance without which it cannot exist is its essence, and thus one is a substance the essence of which is thought.

In order to remove his doubts about the existence of other substances such as people and the material world, Descartes has to do something quite remarkable. He must show that his apparently conceivable doubts are, in fact, nonsense. As is well known, the crucial step in this demonstration is the ontological argument:

on reverting to the examination of the idea which I had of a Perfect Being, I found that in this case existence was implied in it in the same manner in which the equality of its three angles to two right angles is implied in the idea of a triangle; or in the idea of a sphere, that all the points on its surface are equidistant from its centre, or even more evidently still.¹⁵

The concept of the absolutely Perfect Being includes existence; otherwise that Being would be less than perfect. The statement 'the Perfect Being does not exist' is consequently self-contradictory; therefore, God exists.

Descartes then has recourse to the benevolence of this Perfect Being in order to demonstrate that his initial doubts about other existents were unfounded:

it is impossible that He should ever deceive me; for in all fraud and deception some imperfection is to be found; and although it may appear that the power of deception is a mark of subtilty or power, yet the desire to deceive without doubt testifies to malice or feebleness, and accordingly cannot be found in God.¹⁶

Thus, although he access only to modifications of his thinking substance, Descartes can nevertheless be assured that his perceptions, on the whole, correspond to extended substance: 'I do not see how He could be defended from the accusation of

¹⁵ Descartes, 'Discourse on Method', p.104.

¹⁶ René Descartes, 'Meditations on First Philosophy', in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, trans. by Elizabeth S. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1911), I, pp.131-200 (p.172).

deceit if these ideas were produced by causes other than corporeal objects. Hence we must allow that corporeal things exist.’¹⁷ Descartes therefore believes that he has shown his radical doubt to be latently nonsensical. If one looks hard enough, one discovers the logical necessity of the ontological proof, and this prevents wholesale scepticism about the relationship between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*.

However, even if one accepts the ontological argument, Descartes’ logical method is still an inadequate account of everyday knowledge. Hume recognises that statements about the world are not deductive. To postulate, for example, the existence of a cause without its effect is not to violate the principle of non-contradiction – in ontological terms, cause and effect are substantial existents:

as all distinct ideas are separable from each other, and as the ideas of cause and effect are evidently distinct, ‘twill be easy for us to conceive any object to be non-existent this moment, and existent the next, without conjoining to it the distinct idea of a cause or productive principle. The separation, therefore, of the idea of a cause from that of a beginning of existence, is plainly possible for the imagination; and consequently the actual separation of these objects is so far possible, that it implies no contradiction nor absurdity; and is therefore incapable of being refuted by any reasoning from mere ideas; without which ‘tis impossible to demonstrate the necessity of a cause.’¹⁸

Hume, though, is untroubled by this inability of philosophical reasoning to reconstruct everyday belief – he assumes that such apparent knowledge is mere psychological certitude. He therefore elaborates Descartes’ account of error. The latter refers to habituation to account for his difficulties in believing only the dictates of pure reason: ‘ancient and commonly held opinions still revert frequently to my mind, long and familiar custom having given them the right to occupy my mind

¹⁷ Descartes, ‘Meditations’, p.191.

against my inclination and rendered them almost master of my belief.’¹⁹ Hume develops this account of error by arguing that what is apparently knowledge of the world is no more than such insistent opinion:

Reason can never satisfy us that the existence of any one object does ever imply that of another; so that when we pass from the impression of one to the idea or belief of another, we are not determin’d by reason, but by custom or a principle of association.²⁰

An expectation of a certain effect upon a cause is merely an ‘opinion’ which ‘may be most accurately defin’d, A LIVELY IDEA RELATED TO OR ASSOCIATED WITH A PRESENT IMPRESSION.’²¹ Indeed, phenomenological vivacity is also essential to Hume’s account of belief in a world beyond thought. We will recall his distinction between impressions – ‘those perceptions, which enter with most force and violence’ – and ideas – ‘the faint images of these in thinking and reasoning.’²² The distinction between the world of things and the world of subjective experience is merely this variation in vivacity: ‘When I shut my eyes and think of my chamber, the ideas I form are exact representations of the impressions I felt.’²³

The consistent application of the principle of non-contradiction therefore leads to an essentially schizoid conception of the self. A person is partly a rational ego which believes only what is given by pure logic. The mind, however, is incessantly badgered by sensory thoughts. Some of these are merely muttered *sotto voce* – such as ‘here is a unicorn’, or ‘carpets can fly’. Others, though, are bellowed at the mind:

¹⁸ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. by L.A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), pp. 79–80.

¹⁹ Descartes, ‘Meditations’, p. 148.

²⁰ Hume, p. 97.

²¹ Hume, p. 96.

²² Hume, p. 1.

'HERE IS AN ORANGE!', 'FIRE HEATS WATER!'. The latter are opinions, and are the source of our pretension to rational knowledge about the world. The everyday certainties which cannot be generated by logic alone are presented to the ego by psychological causality. Belief in the existence of such logically separable existents as other things, other people, and cause and effect, is therefore understood as a kind of *akrasia* by which the soul of the philosopher succumbs to the force of habituated opinion.

This account of a person as a 'ghost in the machine'²⁴ is, of course, motivated by epistemological considerations. If the sufficiency of the principle of non-contradiction is problematised then this analysis of human being is also threatened. The first to perform such a critique of pure reason is, obviously enough, Kant. He understands that the fundamental inadequacy of rationalism is the impossibility of deducing all the existents which are supposedly put in doubt by the concept of substance. The rationalists, he argues, confuse the semantic coherence of an idea with an assertion of the existence of a thing adequate to that idea:

A concept is always possible if it is not self-contradictory. This is the logical criterion of possibility [...]. But it may nonetheless be an empty concept, unless the objective reality of the synthesis through which the concept is generated has been specifically proved; and such proof [...] rests on principles of possible experience, and not on the principle of analysis (the law of contradiction).²⁵

The ontological proof notes merely the unintelligibility – and not the untruth – of the proposition 'God – the perfect being – does not exist':

²³ Hume, p.3.

²⁴ To borrow Gilbert Ryle's term from *The Concept of Mind* (London: Hutchinson, 1949).

by the simple device of forming an *a priori* concept of a thing in such a manner as to include existence within the scope of its meaning, we have supposed ourselves to have justified the conclusion that because existence necessarily belongs to the object of this concept [...] we are also of necessity, in accordance with the law of identity, required to posit the existence of its object, and that this being is therefore itself absolutely necessary.²⁶

The principle of non-contradiction is therefore insufficient as a criterion of knowledge:

it is evident that logic, in so far as it expounds the universal and necessary rules of the understanding, must in these rules furnish criteria of truth. Whatever contradicts these rules is false. [...]. These criteria, however, concern only the form of truth, that is, of thought in general; and in so far they are quite correct, but are not by themselves sufficient. For although our knowledge may be in complete accordance with logical demands, that is, may not contradict itself, it is still possible that it may be in contradiction with its object.²⁷

A judgement must be logically well-formed; but this is merely a necessary condition for knowledge. If we make this the sole principle of knowledge, then we end up unable to distinguish imagination from perception.

Kant, though, is equally dissatisfied with the empiricist account of knowledge about matters of fact:

The concept of cause, for instance, which expresses the necessity of an event under a presupposed condition, would be false if it rested only on an arbitrary subjective necessity, implanted in us, of connecting certain empirical representations according to the rule of causal relation. I would not then be able to say that the effect is connected with the cause in the object, that is to say, necessarily, but only that I am so constituted that I cannot think this representation otherwise than as thus connected. This is exactly what the sceptic most desires. For if this be the situation, all our insight, resting on the supposed objective validity of our judgments, is nothing but sheer illusion; nor would there be wanting people who would refuse to admit this subjective necessity, a necessity which can only be felt. Certainly a man cannot

²⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by Norman Kemp Smith (London: MacMillan, 1929), A596n.

²⁶ Kant, A594.

²⁷ Kant, A59.

dispute with anyone regarding that which depends merely on the mode in which he is himself organised.²⁸

According to the empiricists, any judgement is merely the report of an association of ideas within the subject. Anyone who judges differently cannot be reproached: if their simple ideas associate differently then they are quite justified in believing that fire cools, or that apples taste salty. They are reporting accurately on the natural order of their souls; to have them do otherwise would be like asking a scientific researcher to falsify the data of an experiment.

Kant, however, believes he can show that statements about matters of fact can, and must, be rational. He therefore postulates a faculty of *a priori* synthesis. Only if there is this capacity to issue rational judgements about matters of fact can there indeed be a common world of experience. This is the role played by the understanding:

The manifold of representations can be given in an intuition which is purely sensible, that is, nothing but receptivity; and the form of this intuition can lie *a priori* in our faculty of representation, without being anything more than the mode in which the subject is affected. But the combination (*conjunctio*) of a manifold in general can never come to us through the senses, and cannot, therefore, be already contained in the pure form of sensible intuition. [...] To this act the general title 'synthesis' may be assigned, as indicating that we cannot represent to ourselves anything as combined in the object which we have not ourselves previously combined, and that of all representations *combination* is the only one which cannot be given through objects.²⁹

This proposed solution, however, assumes the primacy of the principle of non-contradiction. The operation of combination is only postulated because of the atomistic conclusions to the search for substantiality in the empiricist and rationalist

²⁸ Kant, B168.

tradition. We are, for example, of the opinion that there are objects in the world, but the conceivability of the separate existence of shape, taste, texture, smell and sound reminds us that, in truth, there are only these discrete sensory modalities. Furthermore, though one pseudo-object may have followed another in the past, it is quite conceivable that this so-called effect might exist independently. Also, since it cannot now conceivably be two different times, and here cannot conceivably be two different places, space and time are a series of dimensionless points and instants.

Kant's 'Copernican' solution therefore derives its plausibility precisely from this disjunction between what is real in light of the principle of non-contradiction, and what is experienced by the subject. Time, space, and causality are all accomplishments of a transcendental ego which must be postulated in order to account for this difference between experience and its monadic elements. Thus, even as he perceives the inadequacy of 'A is A', Kant also argues towards a transcendental faculty of synthesis which operates upon what is, by this principle, real. This, of course, means that he explains only the synthesis of the illusion which is our experience. Everyday knowledge continues to be understood as error; and, indeed, should anyone care to disagree with what we hold to be true about the phenomenal world, we cannot argue with them – all illusions are equally illusory.

Kant's attempted Copernican revolution in philosophy cannot succeed, but, nevertheless, we must agree with the critical element of his philosophy: the principle of non-contradiction is unable to account for what we actually know. We must, however, be consistent in our rejection of its supposed adequacy. If we are not, then

²⁹ Kant, B130.

the schizoid position will inevitably be re-affirmed in order to explain one's irrational belief in the illusions of the phenomenal world.

The Divided Self in the Philosophy of John Macmurray

The Scottish philosopher, John Macmurray, is a determined opponent of the divided self of Western philosophy. He argues that this conclusion is consequent upon the assumption that knowledge is fundamentally theoretical:

The particular unreality which concerns us is the disruption of the integrity of the Self through a dualism of practical and theoretical activity. We are asked to embark upon a purely theoretical activity which isolates itself from the influence of all 'practical' elements – since these must introduce bias and prejudice – in the hope of attaining a knowledge which will take precedence over the beliefs by which, in practice, we live.³⁰

For Macmurray, Descartes is central to this denigration of everyday pre-reflective practice:

The method of doubt would have us abstract from the fact of belief or disbelief, separate what is believed from the believing of it and entertain it simply as a 'proposition' whose truth or falsity is undetermined. It is hoped that this will provide us with a neutral starting-point for an activity of thinking which aims to determine, purely theoretically, whether it is to be accepted as true or rejected as false. Only when it has been so certified by reason can it properly be said to be *known*. This, it may be said, is the point of view of philosophy – that nothing is known until it has been transformed, by rational criticism, from a mere belief into a logical certainty. Knowledge, in this strict sense of the term, is the product of thought and lies at the end of a process which begins in doubt.³¹

In the Cartesian method, knowledge is to be generated from a state of ignorance by the consistent application of a theory of thinking – namely, the principle of non-contradiction.

In order to appreciate properly Macmurray's response to Descartes, it is necessary to consider the status of the principle of non-contradiction. The Cartesian

³⁰ John Macmurray, *The Self as Agent: being the Gifford Lectures delivered in the University of Glasgow in 1953 by John Macmurray* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), pp.77-78.

method is traditionally philosophical in its assumption that we must employ a theory of knowledge in order to generate knowledge. It is assumed that only by knowing what knowing is, can we set about producing knowledge. But how can we know what knowing is, without first having that account of knowledge to guide our investigation of knowing? It is precisely this problem which plagues Aristotle. Any putative theory of knowledge could only be generated from another, prior theory, and this prior theory would, in turn, require another – and so on: ‘one party, [...], claims that we are led back ad infinitum on the grounds that we would not understand what is posterior because of what is prior if there are no primitives.’³² An alternative to this infinite regress would be the hypothesis that the theory which guides the investigation is also that which the investigation produces: ‘The other party [...] argue that nothing prevents there being demonstration of everything; for it is possible for the demonstration to come about in a circle and reciprocally.’³³ But this, to Aristotle, is quite unacceptable:

that it is impossible to demonstrate simpliciter in a circle is clear, if demonstration must depend on what is prior and more familiar; for it is impossible for the same things at the same time to be prior and posterior to the same things.³⁴

If the theory of thought is not to generate an infinite regress, or to be circular, then it seems to Aristotle that we must have an immediate knowledge of the theory of knowledge: ‘if it is necessary to understand the things which are prior and on which

³¹ Macmurray, *Self as Agent*, p.78.

³² Aristotle, ‘Posterior Analytics’, trans. by Jonathan Barnes, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. by Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University, 1984) I, pp.114-66 (72b).

³³ Aristotle, ‘Posterior Analytics’, 72b.

³⁴ Aristotle, ‘Posterior Analytics’, 72b.

the demonstration depends, and it comes to a stop at some time, it is necessary for these immediates to be non-demonstrable.’³⁵

For Aristotle, as we have seen, this immediate foundational knowledge of the theory of knowing is of the principle of non-contradiction:

he whose subject is being *qua* being must be able to state the most certain principles of all things. This is the philosopher, and the most certain principle of all is that regarding which it is impossible to be mistaken; for such a principle must be both the best known (for all men may be mistaken about things which they do not know), and non-hypothetical. For a principle which every one must have who knows anything about being, is not a hypothesis; and that which everyone must know who knows anything, he must already have when he comes to a special study. Evidently then such a principle is the most certain of all; which principle this is, we proceed to say. It is, that the same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject in the same respect.³⁶

Only this principle is so obvious as to be indisputable. It is therefore accepted by Descartes as the underlying rule of all inference:

Those long chains of reasoning, simple and easy as they are, of which geometricians make use in order to arrive at the most difficult demonstrations, had caused me to imagine that all those things which fall under the cognizance of man might very likely be mutually related in the same fashion; and that, provided only that we abstain from receiving anything as true which is not so, and always retain the order which is necessary in order to deduce the one conclusion from the other, there can be nothing so remote that we cannot reach to it, nor so recondite that we cannot discover it.³⁷

The crux of this logical method, and the concomitant ontology of substance, is therefore the assumption that we must be able to say what knowing is before we can know. This, unfortunately, forces us to postulate a theory of knowledge which is supposedly employed in order to generate the theory of knowledge. We thereby

³⁵ Aristotle, ‘Posterior Analytics’, 72b.

³⁶ Aristotle, ‘Metaphysics’, 1005b.

encounter a dilemma between infinite regress and vicious circularity to which the standard response is to conclude that the theory of knowing is known immediately. Accordingly, there arises the dogma that the re-assuringly obvious principle of non-contradiction is sufficient to account for the complexity and variety of human reason. This, however, must lead to some untenable consequences. If there is no knowing without consciousness of the theory of thinking, then philosophy is entirely trivial – it seems that one must already know what knowing is before one even begins such an investigation. This leads to the production of weighty tomes which are less concerned with the investigation of reasoning, and more concerned with the various sleights-of-hand by which the diversity of human argument may be reconciled with the narrow compass of the principle of non-contradiction. This is the aim of such doctrines as the ontological argument, Kantian phenomenism, and the explanation of belief in terms of mental nature.

Macmurray's work suggests a way out of this dead-end and the division of the self which it implies. We should, he claims, revise our assumption that we must be able to say what thinking is before we can do it. Thinking is, instead, a skill which we already possess before we attempt to theorise and articulate it:

Action is primary and concrete, thought is secondary, abstract and derivative. This must mean that the distinction between 'right' and 'wrong', which is constitutive for action, is the primary standard of validity; while the distinction between 'true' and 'false' is secondary. In some sense, though not necessarily directly, it must be possible to distinguish between 'right' and 'wrong' before distinguishing between 'true' and 'false', and so without reference to the truth or falsity of a judgement, and to derive the latter from the former.³⁸

³⁷ Descartes, 'Discourse on Method', p.92.

³⁸ Macmurray, *Self as Agent*, p.89.

To know is therefore primarily to act rightly:

Knowingly to actualize one of a number of possibles, and in doing so to negate the others, is to characterize the act that is so performed as right and the others as wrong. Again, it is the doing of the action which so distinguishes between right and wrong, not a theoretical judgement which may or may not precede, accompany or follow the doing.³⁹

Thus, if we find that our theory of knowledge has no impact upon what we actually believe, then we must accept the authority of our skilful coping with the world over our putative theoretical reconstruction:

Suppose that I am presented with a triumphant logical demonstration. I accept its premisses; I can find no flaw in the argument. The conclusion follows with logical necessity and is therefore logically certain. But at the same time I find the conclusion impossible to believe. What then? I can only reject it *in toto*, even if I can find no theoretical grounds for doing so.⁴⁰

This, of course, differs greatly from the traditional metaphysical position in which even though 'I refuse to act in conformity with my theory [...] and so provide evidence that I do not really believe it'⁴¹, I 'can always lay the blame upon the body and its practical demands.'⁴²

We might ask, however, what characterises pre-reflective thinking as right or wrong. Macmurray argues that the primary distinction between skilful and clumsy action is normative. Though indeed, one may be skilful in a purely instrumental sense, this is not the primary ability of a human being: 'the skills a child acquires, and the form in which he acquires them, fit him to take his place as a member of a personal

³⁹ Macmurray, *Self as Agent*, p.140.

⁴⁰ Macmurray, *Self as Agent*, p.78.

⁴¹ John Macmurray, *Persons in Relation being the Gifford Lectures delivered in the University of Glasgow in 1954 by John Macmurray* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), p.130.

community, and not to fend for himself in natural surroundings.⁴³ The child's environment is not the natural world; rather, it is the social world:

In the human infant – and this is the heart of the matter – the impulse to communication is his sole adaptation to the world into which he is born. Implicit and unconscious it may be, yet it is sufficient to constitute the mother-child relation as the basic form of human existence, as a personal mutuality, as a 'You and I' with a common life. For this reason the infant is born a person and not an animal. All his subsequent experience, all the habits he forms and the skills he acquires fall within this framework, and are fitted to it. Thus, human experience is, in principle, shared experience; human life, even in its most individual elements, is a common life; and human behaviour carries always, in its inherent structure, a reference to the personal Other.⁴⁴

Therefore, to be skilled is fundamentally to have been socialised into the practices of a group:

the child's development has a continuous reference to the distinction between 'right' and 'wrong'. He learns to await the right time for the satisfaction of his desires; that some activities are permitted and others suppressed; that some things may be played with and others not. He learns, in general to submit his impulses to an order imposed by another will than his; and to subordinate his own desires to those of another person. He learns, in a word, to submit to reason.⁴⁵

Macmurray therefore finds a profound philosophical significance in the primary kinship relation:

In the actual situation in which we all begin our individual existence – in the mother-child relation – our own agency is negative. It is the Other who does everything for us, who is the Agent upon whose action we are totally dependent, and within whose activity, supporting and limiting us, our own action is progressively achieved. If we use, as we must, the reflective

⁴² Macmurray, *Persons in Relation*, p.131.

⁴³ Macmurray, *Persons in Relation*, pp.58-59.

⁴⁴ Macmurray, *Persons in Relation*, pp.60-61.

⁴⁵ Macmurray, *Persons in Relation*, p.59.

language of maturity, we may say that the first knowledge is the recognition of the Other as the person or agent in whom we live and move and have our being.⁴⁶

Before one can know-that, one must know-how; but prior even to knowing-how, is simply knowing, or acknowledging, another.

Metaphysics, of course, takes knowing-that as the primary form of knowledge. Macmurray argues that the attraction of this philosophically untenable position is precisely the obliteration of recognitive knowing which it entails. The postulation of the primacy of the theoretical allows the philosopher to alienate himself from his existence as one person among many:

our fear of the Other generates the desire to escape from the demands of the Other upon us, by withdrawing from action into another life, the life of the mind, in which we can exist as thinkers, and realize our freedom in reflection. If this could be, then we should be pure minds, and spectators of a world of activity in which our actions would be determined for us by laws not of our making. In the realm of thought we should be free, but our bodily life would be determined by the laws of that world of necessity from which we have escaped. The world of action would become an *external* world, a world of phenomena; that is to say, a *show* – a dramatic spectacle which unrolls itself upon the stage for us to watch, to follow and to enjoy.⁴⁷

The philosopher feels he is answerable only for the thoughts of his logical ego, and not for the beliefs and practices of his putatively mechanical body: 'we have uncovered the motive of dualist thinking. It is the desire to know the truth without having to live by the truth. It is the secret wish to escape from moral commitment, from responsibility.'⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Macmurray, *Persons in Relation*, p.77.

⁴⁷ Macmurray, *Persons in Relation*, p.130-31.

⁴⁸ Macmurray, *Persons in Relation*, p.131.

Macmurray is, of course, free to criticise the metaphysical tradition as false-consciousness. He has provided a counter-argument to the conventional assumption of the primacy of theory, and this means that the metaphysical worldview can now be accounted for in terms of unreasonable belief. We might ask, though, if his account of the schizoid ideology is entirely convincing, and, for this, we should turn to the work of R.D. Laing.

The Divided Self, Authenticity, and Excommunication in the work of R.D. Laing

In *The Divided Self*, Laing articulates a suspicion of Western philosophy which, he acknowledges, is indebted to another Scottish thinker:

In the following pages, we shall be concerned specifically with people who experience themselves as automata, as robots, as bits of machinery, or even as animals. Such persons are rightly regarded as crazy. Yet why do we not regard a theory that seeks to transmute persons into automata or animals as equally crazy? The experience of oneself and others as persons is primary and self-validating. It exists prior to the scientific and philosophical difficulties about how such experience is possible or how it is to be explained.

Indeed, it is difficult to explain the persistence in all our thinking of what Macmurray has called the 'biological analogy': 'We should expect,' writes Macmurray [...], 'that the emergence of a scientific psychology would be paralleled by a transition from an organic to a personal ... conception of unity' [...], that we should be able to *think* of the individual man as well as to experience him neither as a thing nor as an organism but as a person and that we should have a way of expressing that form of unity which is specifically personal.⁴⁹

Laing and Macmurray, however, differ fundamentally in their account of the genesis of mind-body dualism. For the latter, there is always an element of immaturity behind the divided self:

if a child is to grow up, he must learn, stage by stage, to do for himself what has up to that time been done for him by the mother. But at all the crucial points, at least, the decision rests with the mother, and therefore it must take the form of a deliberate refusal on her part to continue to show the child those expressions of her care for him that he expects. This refusal is, of course, itself an expression of the mother's care for him. But the child's stock of knowledge is too exiguous, the span of his anticipation too short, for him to understand this. For him, the refusal can only mean the breakdown of the relationship by which and in which he has his being. In his need he calls to the Other, but the Other is deaf to his entreaty.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ R.D. Laing, *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1965), p.23.

⁵⁰ Macmurray, *Persons in Relation*, pp.88-89.

The child who is unable eventually to understand that this apparent hostility is illusory will remain trapped in a life of fantastic alienation:

He will become a 'good' boy, and by his 'goodness' he will seek to placate the mother whose enmity he fears. In compensation for this submission he will create for himself a secret life of phantasy where his own wishes are granted. And this life of the imagination in an imaginary world will be for him his *real* life in the *real* world – the world of ideas. His life in the actual world will remain unreal – a necessity which he will make as habitual and automatic as possible. What importance it has for him will derive from its necessity as a support for and a means to his real life, which is the life of thought, the spiritual life, the life of the mind.⁵¹

This condition – which is clearly analogous to Fairbairn's concept of the schizoid – is fundamentally, for Macmurray, the result of a breakdown of faith between Self and Other in which the Self is unable to understand that the Other is really acting in his or her best interests. Just as the mother's hostility is only 'apparent', so the world only 'appears' dangerous:

For the contemplative mode, the *real* world is the spiritual world, and the *real* life is the spiritual life. Just as the child can take refuge from the apparent hostility of the mother by withdrawing into a life of phantasy, so the adult can solve the problem of living in a world which appears dangerous by withdrawing into reflection, and adopting the attitude of a spectator.⁵²

The dangers of Macmurray's assumption are obvious when we consider Laing's more charitable interpretation of the divided self. Consider this account of 'David', 'an ambulatory schizophrenic'⁵³:

⁵¹ Macmurray, *Persons in Relation*, p.103.

⁵² Macmurray, *Persons in Relation*, p.123.

⁵³ R.D. Laing, *Wisdom, Madness, and Folly: The Making of a Psychiatrist 1927-57*, Canongate Classics 89 (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1998), p.143.

In his teens he lives with his father. Father's girlfriend – physically naked – father and girlfriend make love with him around. Father sometimes loses his temper with him, hits him: he feels increasingly abject, cowardly, frightened. He decides to 'agree' with everything. He becomes compliant, dishonest, insincere, flatters, internally hates, externally fawns.⁵⁴

Laing's analysis makes it quite clear that the danger posed by the real world is not an illusion created by David's cognitive immaturity – it is quite real suffering and torment which is inflicted upon him. He becomes schizoid in order to cope with a situation which is genuinely intolerable:

His body: this place of rage, terror, desire and despair. This place of life, which is too harrowing and too fraught with too many conflicts and contradictions that entangle him, that he cannot resolve or transcend. What does he do? He withdraws from his body. He dissociates himself from it. He refuses to *be* it, live it, inhabit it, permeate it with himself.⁵⁵

David, who is being treated by his father as if were an unfeeling thing, can regain a sense of agency by cultivating his own Cartesian split:

he is suffering from depersonalization only in so far as he is depersonalizing himself in a situation in which he finds that he is being depersonalized – that is, simply, not being treated as a person. A condition and a process in which he originally felt himself to be the passive victim is *now* the outcome of his own action on his own experience – that is, of his own *praxis* – in a situation that is for him untenable, *almost* checkmate, except for this move.⁵⁶

The schizoid personality, for Laing, accordingly forms an interesting contrast with such classical pathologies as denial. In denial, one censors one's dissatisfaction with the role indicated by one's kin:

⁵⁴ Laing, *Wisdom, Madness, and Folly*, p.145.

⁵⁵ Laing, *Wisdom, Madness, and Folly*, pp.147-48.

⁵⁶ Laing, *Wisdom, Madness, and Folly*, p.148.

Denial is demanded by the others: it is part of the *transpersonal system of collusion*, whereby we comply with the others, and they comply with us. For instance, one requires collusion to play 'Happy Families'. Individually, I am unhappy. I deny I am to *myself*; I deny I am denying anything to *myself* and to the others. They must do the same. I must collude with their denial and collusion, and they must collude with mine.⁵⁷

The person in denial is unconscious of this normalisation of his or her experience: 'I am unhappy. I am *not* unhappy (denial). I am *not* denying that I am unhappy (denial of denial).'⁵⁸ The schizoid, however, even though he perhaps has no clear idea of the person he would authentically be, remains conscious of his role-playing, and he assigns it to the passivity of the body:

the individual experiences his self as being more or less divorced or detached from his body. *The body is felt more as one object among other objects in the world than as the core of the individual's own being.* Instead of being the core of his true self, the body is felt as the core of a *false self*, which a detached, disembodied, 'inner', 'true' self looks on at with tenderness, amusement, or hatred as the case may be.⁵⁹

The schizoid person attempts therefore to exist as a thinking substance, and so fails to *be* in that primary, spontaneous, practical, intersubjective manner which the Cartesian method can neither reconstruct nor wholly erode.

The life of the mind is, of course, consequently emptied of spontaneity, feeling, fellowship and authenticity:

the self is never revealed directly in the individual's expressions and actions, nor does it experience anything spontaneously or immediately. The self's relationship to the other is always at one remove. The direct and immediate transactions between the individual, the

⁵⁷ R.D. Laing, 'Politics of the Family', in R.D. Laing, *The Politics of the Family and Other Essays* (London: Tavistock, 1971), pp.65-124 (p.99).

⁵⁸ Laing, 'Politics of the Family', p.99.

⁵⁹ Laing, *Divided Self*, p.69.

other, and the world, even in such basic respects as perceiving and acting, all come to be meaningless, futile, and false.⁶⁰

The mental self therefore attempts to relate to its own imaginary others:

A patient [...] who conducted his life along relatively 'normal' lines outwardly but operated this inner split, presented as his original complaint the fact that he could never have intercourse with his wife but only with his own image of her. That is, his body had physical relations with her body, but his mental self, while this was going on, could only look on at what his body was doing and/or *imagine* himself having intercourse with his wife as an object of his imagination.⁶¹

Such ghostly others are created because, as we have seen, the self needs recognition and affirmation:

*the sense of identity requires the existence of another by whom one is known; and a conjunction of this other person's recognition of one's self with self-recognition. It is not possible to go on living indefinitely in a sane way if one tries to be a man disconnected from all others.*⁶²

This analysis explains Laing's fascination with the therapeutic potential of everyday communion. He notes the effect of kinship rituals upon the patients of Gartnavel mental hospital:

The New Year is the biggest celebration in Scotland. It is marked by prolonged carousing on the part of the alcoholic fraternity, but many teetotallers celebrate the spirit of the New Year contentedly sober. There is no 'religion' about it. There is a special spirit abroad – 'Auld Lang Syne', 'A man's a man for a' that.' In Gartnavel, in the so-called 'back wards', I have seen catatonic patients who hardly make a move, or utter a word, or seem to notice or care about anyone or anything around them year in and year out, smile, laugh, shake hands, wish someone 'A Guid New Year' and even dance ... and then by the afternoon or evening or next morning revert to their listless apathy. The change, however fleeting, in some

⁶⁰ Laing, *Divided Self*, p.80.

⁶¹ Laing, *Divided Self*, p.86.

⁶² Laing, *Divided Self*, p.139.

of the most chronically withdrawn, 'backward' patients is amazing. If any drug had this effect, for a few hours, even minutes, it would be world famous, and would deserve to be celebrated as much as the Scottish New Year. The intoxicant here however is not a drug, not even alcoholic spirits, but the celebration of a spirit of fellowship.⁶³

It was observations such as these which led Laing to attempt to restore kinship between all the individuals within the hospital. As we might expect, eating and drinking are the media of recognition:

After several months, after a lot of heart-searching, matron and superintendent overruled misgivings and allowed the nurses and patients to have a gas stove and oven. They could now make tea for themselves. This was unthinkable in the ward (danger of pouring scalding water over themselves or drinking it, etc.). They made tea and they made some buns. Ian Cameron, one of the psychiatrists, took some of the buns over to the doctors' sitting room and offered them around. There were seven or eight of us psychiatrists sitting around. Only two or three were brave, or reckless, enough, to eat a bun baked by a chronic schizophrenic.

This incident convinced me of something. Who was crazier? Staff or patients? Excommunication runs deep. A companion means, literally, one with whom one shares bread. Companionship between staff and patients had broken down. The psychiatrists were afraid of catching schizophrenia.⁶⁴

The refusal by the psychiatrists to eat the buns marks the limits of the renewed fellowship. The patients may have become human to each other, but only a few psychiatrists were prepared to extend this recognition. For Laing, the distinction between the sane and the mad is therefore analogous to all the other divisions between kin and alien:

There are interfaces in the socio-economic-political structure of our society where communion is impossible or almost impossible. We are ranged on opposite sides. We are enemies, we are against each other before we meet. We are so far apart as not to recognize the other even as a human being or, if we do, only as one to be abolished immediately.

This rift or rent occurs between master and slave, the wealthy and the poor, on the basis of such differences as class, race, sex, age.

⁶³ R.D. Laing, *Wisdom, Madness and Folly*, pp.31-32.

⁶⁴ Laing, *Wisdom, Madness and Folly*, p.126.

It crops up also across the sane-mad line. It occurred to me that it might be a relevant factor in some of the misery and disorder of certain psychotic processes; even sometimes, possibly, a salient factor in aetiology, care, treatment, recovery or deterioration.

This rift or rent is healed through a relationship with anybody, but it has to be somebody. Any 'relationship' through which this factor heals is 'therapeutic', whether it is what is called, professionally, a 'therapeutic relationship' or not. The loss of a sense of human solidarity and camaraderie and communion affects people in different ways. Some people never seem to miss it. Others can't get on without it.⁶⁵

To the traditional psychiatrist, the mad person is not a person; he or she is merely a malfunctioning neurological system. Mental patients are, in this view, precisely what their name implies: they are passive mechanisms, and not living agents. True therapy, however, begins with the restoration of a properly recognitive relationship in which a community accepts the authentic being of the patient – only this can give him or her a motive to return to the everyday world.

Without this welcome back to life, the schizoid ego continues to seek imaginative substitutes for the reality with which it cannot establish a relationship: 'the 'self' whose relatedness to reality is already tenuous becomes less and less a reality-self, and more and more phantasticized as it becomes more and more engaged in phantastic relationships with its own phantoms (imagos).'⁶⁶ In the case of the man who could only relate to an image of his wife,

this patient would have been psychotic, for instance, if, instead of saying that he never had intercourse with his wife 'really', he had insisted that the woman with whom he had intercourse was not his real wife. In a sense, this would be perfectly true; it would be existentially true because in this existential sense his 'real' wife was the object of his own imagination (a phantom or imago), rather than the other human being in bed with him.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Laing, *Wisdom, Madness and Folly*, p.32.

⁶⁶ Laing, *Divided Self*, p.85.

⁶⁷ Laing, *Divided Self*, p.87.

The schizoid self also tends to acquire a sense of transcendence:

his 'self', in its own phantasied relationships, has become more and more volatilized, free from the contingencies and necessities that encumber it as an object among others in the world, where he knows he would be committed to be of this time and this place, subject to life and death, and embedded in this flesh and these bones.⁶⁸

We have, then, in Laing's work, the essentials of transcendental kinship: a self which tries to surpass everyday embodied reality in an effort to relate to spiritual or mental others. This paradigm is, as we have seen, readily apparent in the relation of Duncan Thaw, Percy Phinn, and Miss Partridge to their respective divinities. It can also be found in Martha and Graeme: they will, they believe, be united only when each has transcended the compulsive fantasy that is mistaken for the real world. Jock McLeish can also be located within this model. Although his fantasies are largely devoid of religious or metaphysical connotations, his impoverished and resentful schizoid life is nonetheless filled with phantom others who can never stand in for the real lovers he has lost.

Laing also provides a paradigm for my analysis of novelistic time. With the schizoid disavowal of everyday agency, there comes a loss of temporality. Thus, in the case of 'Rose':

She had no future. Time had stopped moving. She couldn't look forward and all her memories were dense and solid things, jostling around in her head. It was clear that she was losing any sense of the differentiation of events in time as past, present, or future, of 'lived time'.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Laing, *Divided Self*, p.147.

⁶⁹ Laing, *Divided Self*, p.152.

This is exactly the attitude to temporality which, as we have seen, is the eventual result of the Cartesian method. The category of substance, which ontologises the principle of non-contradiction, destroys any genuine temporality: past, present, and future come to be regarded as an illusion superimposed upon indivisible and atemporal instants. Traditional novelistic narrative and story encourage this attitude to temporality, and this is why the act of reading may also be a kind of communion for the schizoid mind. Those who read are assured that there are other souls who appreciate the unreality of embodied finite existence. This literary cultism is precisely what Friel and Gray wish to avoid, and this is why, as we have seen, they construct their stories and narratives in order to defamiliarise and subvert pre-existing conventions.

Conclusion

Friel and Gray therefore write as members of their local culture. The importance of community in their work locates them within the intellectual context of twentieth-century Scotland. The phenomenon of transcendental kinship which this thesis has articulated can be further elaborated and explained by reference to Robertson Smith, Fairbairn, Macmurray, and Laing. They provide a credible Scottish theory with which one may approach the work of Scottish writers. It is unfortunate, however, that after Laing's work in the late sixties, the interpersonal tradition in Scottish thought has lapsed.⁷⁰ The European thinkers who are most concerned with community tend now to be German: Jurgen Habermas, Axel Honneth, and Karl-Otto Apel have all advanced theories in which human interaction plays a central part.⁷¹ It is my belief that if William Robertson Smith, W.R.D. Fairbairn, John Macmurray, and R.D. Laing had been taken seriously within Scottish universities, then there would have been a theory

⁷⁰ We should also include J.B. Baillie, the translator of Hegel, and author of *Studies in Human Nature* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1921), as part of this tradition.

⁷¹ For example: Jurgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, 2 vols, trans. by Thomas McCarthy (Cambridge and Oxford: Polity in association with Basil Blackwell, 1984), I; Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, trans. by Joel Anderson (Cambridge and Oxford: Polity in association with Basil Blackwell, 1995); Karl-Otto Apel, *Towards a Transformation of Philosophy*, trans. by Glyn Adey and David Frisby (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980).

of communicative action developed within Scotland. This thesis will, I hope, allow the tradition which they developed to be remembered, revived, and continued.

APPENDIX I

PLOT SUMMARIES OF FOUR GEORGE FRIEL NOVELS

The Bank of Time tells of the growth into manhood of David Heylyn, the youngest of three brothers living in a Glasgow tenement. After losing a childhood battle with a neighbouring gang led by a boy called Carter, David feels he is bound to vindicate his family's honour. He therefore enters a boxing tournament, but comes up against a superior opponent and is blinded in one eye. This injury brings him into contact with the local midwife, Mrs Ruthven, and her daughter, Mary. It also intensifies his resentment of Mark, his oldest brother, for his desertion during the battle with Carter. This grudge leads David to provoke a confrontation between Mark and their father, and, as a consequence, Mark leaves home. David is therefore left at home with his brother, Paul, whom he assists in his photographic enterprise. Paul's ambition, however, takes him to London, and David is left alone in Glasgow with his father. After his father's death, David is left only with Mrs Ruthven and Mary. He suppresses his sexual love for Mary and accepts her decision to run off secretly to London with a married man. During her absence, David receives pornographic photographs sent by Menzies, the childhood organiser of the boxing tournament who is now Paul's business partner. The last photograph David receives is a nude study of Mary Ruthven; it is only when Mary returns after her mother's death that David realises she is, in fact, pregnant in the photograph. Mary dies shortly after giving birth and David, in accordance with her wishes, attempts to bring up her child on his own by declaring himself to be the biological father. He eventually abandons this attempt, however,

when the return of Mark from overseas brings him to an awareness of the stultification of his own life. David therefore gives up the child to the infertile daughter of his friend, Mrs Marchbanks. The novel ends as David sets out to rebuild his life via a renewed network of intimate friends: his brother, Mark; his general practitioner, Dr Tennant; Mrs Marchbanks and her daughter, Muriel; and even Carter himself, now a successful businessman.

The protagonist of *The Boy Who Wanted Peace* is Percy Phinn, a young man who longs to lead the leisured life of a poet. He also dreams of leading his youth gang – the ‘Brotherhood’ – into such an existence. His hopes appear to be coming true when the Brotherhood find a cache of stolen money in the cellar of the school where Percy’s recently deceased father was caretaker. It was hidden there by Percy’s uncle, who acquired it through a bank robbery, but who was killed before he could return to collect it. Under the pressure of the continued pursuit of the money by a member of the gang who originally stole it, Percy decides to leave for England in order to become a poet. By co-incidence, however, the most law-abiding member of the Brotherhood – Frank Garson – is re-united with his mother through a newspaper advert. Frank no longer feels loyalty to the Brotherhood, and so he informs on Percy, who is arrested in London. After his arrest, Percy concludes that fate has taught him what he should have known all along – that he is genetically unsuited to life as a poet.

Grace and Miss Partridge tells of Annie Partridge, a middle-aged woman living alone in a Glasgow tenement, and of her obsession with Grace Christie, a young girl who lives in the same building. Miss Partridge resolves to kill Grace in order to save the child’s soul from the corruption of puberty. She also anticipates that her own execution for this crime will be a redemptive proof of her graceful detachment from

the corporeal world. However, by a fortunate co-incidence, Grace has toothache and throws away the poisoned sweet she has been given. By then, Miss Partridge has successfully resisted an attempt to rob her of the wages which she transports every Friday as part of her job at the local laundry. This proves to be a less transcendental display of that 'greater love' by which one is willing to lay down one's life for others.

Around this central narrative, run other stories of those associated with the tenement. There is the narrative of Duncan Ross – 'Dross' – and his eventual estrangement from his girlfriend, Bobo. Dross subsequently joins a criminal gang led by Alec 'Tiger' Lillie. It is Dross who inspires the attempt to rob Miss Partridge. The robbery had originally been the subject of drunken pub talk about how he could have revenge on Miss Partridge for her harassment of Bobo. As well as the story of Dross and Bobo, there is the narrative of Donald Duthie and Hugh Main. The pair are cousins: Donald, an arts student, lodges in the tenement with the Stockwells, and Hugh, a medical student, is his regular visitor. Hugh is well-liked and sociable, and is even asked by Miss Partridge to put down her ailing parrot, Shelley. Donald, who is rather shy and awkward, is infatuated with Bobo and seems to think that Hugh, who often flirts and gossips with her, could procure her for him. Hugh dissuades Donald from this action, but later arranges for Bobo and Donald to have a chat together in the Stockwells' flat. Donald, seemingly driven to an agony of sexual frustration by this meeting, has, the narrator tells us, an abortive encounter with a prostitute and is beaten to death by her minders. Finally, we must not forget the narrator, McKay, who himself lived in this tenement. In the final chapter, he tells us – in an argument with his mother – how he came by the various materials of his narrative. We also learn of his

proximity to at least one source: he unexpectedly met Grace while at university, and she is now his wife.

Mr Alfred, M.A. tells of an alienated alcoholic schoolteacher searching for love in an urban world given over to endless tribal rivalries. He finds some hope in his relationship with Rose Weipers, a pretty twelve-year-old, whom he treats as a daughter, and fantasises of as a future lover. They are split apart, however, at the initiative of a Mrs Provan. She had originally come into conflict with Mr Alfred when she went to the newspapers to protest over his attempt to belt her son, Gerald. She finds a further opportunity for revenge when her daughter, Senga, unwittingly tells her of Mr Alfred's relationship with Rose. Mrs Provan writes an anonymous letter which claims that Mr Alfred is sexually abusing Rose, and, although he is cleared of this allegation, he is subsequently transferred to another high school, and then to a primary school. While out on a pub crawl one night, he is mugged by Gerald and some friends. He receives a head injury and hallucinates a meeting with a mysterious, satanic figure called Tod, who embodies the lawlessness of the city. After this vision, Mr Alfred is arrested for vandalising a wall, and is psychiatrically assessed as insane. He ends up in an institution where he whiles away his days waiting for death to free him from the material world. Running alongside Mr Alfred's story is that of two young lovers, Graeme Roy and Martha Weipers – Rose's sister – who are apparently more active in their alienation from the world, and who eventually gas themselves with car-exhaust fumes.

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